**Topic: How to Assess the Impact of Monitoring and Evaluation Outcomes**

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1. **Introduction**

Monitoring and evaluation is very crucial for evidence informed policy implementation for better impact on the citizens’ lives and transformation of countries. It informs areas of good practices for enhancement and those that require improvements for better performance. This piece of work presents ways in which assessment of monitoring and evaluation outcomes can be done inform those areas so that value addition is seen out of the monitoring and evaluation outcomes.

1. **Background and aim**

Most often monitoring and evaluation is reported to be carried out at various levels of Government. However, little is known about the contributions of monitoring and evaluation outcomes in informing better implementation of policies and interventions for improved service delivery. The aim of this paper therefore is to present ideas on ways to measure the value added or contribution of monitoring and evaluation outcomes in creating change in policies and interventions at different levels. If one is able to determine whether the monitoring and evaluation systems actually improve policy and practice and how to measure their impacts, it helps in supporting the added value of monitoring and evaluation outcomes.

1. **Motivation**

Monitoring and evaluation is carried out at different levels of Government. There is political and technical both at the Central and Local Governments. Despite all these, there is limited literature expounding on how to determine the value added or contribution of monitoring and evaluation work in creating change in policies and interventions at different levels. As a result, there is perpetual outcry among the citizens about poor service delivery despite the numerous monitoring and evaluation taking place. It was expected that the monitoring and evaluation outcomes would inform better implementation of policies and programmes to the satisfaction of the citizens. This piece is therefore making a practical contribution on how measure the value added or contribution of monitoring and evaluation work in creating change in policies and interventions at different levels.

1. **Methodology**

This piece was developed out of engagement with practitioners of monitoring and evaluation across the world. It involved qualitative sharing of knowledge, skills and experiences of monitoring and evaluation in practice in policy and interventions implementation. Experts provided their practical knowledge and experiences on success factors for monitoring and evaluation systems, how to measure the impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation, challenges that may affect the assessment of impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation outcomes and proposed actions.

1. **Success Factors of Monitoring and Evaluation systems**

The impact or contribution or value addition of monitoring and evaluation outcomes depend on the following:

1. The quality of the actions developed, their management and monitoring and evaluation system itself. The system should be robust and well-designed NOT only to measure and detect BUT also to ensure actions, recommendations and decisions are well-noted and implemented.
2. The distinction and clear line between monitoring and evaluation with regard to their purposes, roles, tools, timing, scope, responsibility, etc.
3. The robustness of an monitoring and evaluation system could be determined by as the degree at which it can influence or inform better policy and practice.
4. monitoring and evaluation efforts coupled with good project managers and conducive environment are capable of impacting significantly on the project, target community and the policy framework in a particular country.
5. Building of national monitoring and evaluation should pay attention to both hard and software issues for better impact.
6. The role of consultants, best consulting practices, working with clients and bearing in mind the learning objective of monitoring and evaluation creates better impact.
7. monitoring and evaluation is a close cycle and all outputs of monitoring and evaluation processes should be communicated, implemented, re-assessed and integrated into planning and future program designs.
8. The construction of a national monitoring and evaluation system must start with the publishing of a monitoring and evaluation legal framework that will first will impose upon a Government to have a mid-term strategic plan of "multi-dimensional" development with a results framework as an annex. This national strategic plan must have been prepared through a "true" participatory approach and be endorsed by the Parliament.
9. **How to measure the impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation**

The following were presented on how to measure the impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation at various levels:

1. Nothing is impossible and impact evaluation of evaluations or a systematic review of monitoring and evaluation can be done.
2. The impact of monitoring and evaluation and Indicators for this “Impact" is much related to utility/ use of the outputs of monitoring and evaluation.
3. Measuring the impact of monitoring and evaluation outcomes can be in terms of the outcome influencing decision-making, influencing project or programme or policy change/redesign, influencing more resource allocation, informing improvements in production, productivity, food security and service delivery in general, clarifying problems or challenges or issues.
4. It may not always be possible to measure the contribution at the impact level, but going down to outcome and output level would be easier. To give example of indicators: the number of downloads of an evaluation report or the number of reaches/ views. % of monitoring and evaluation reports shared on websites of related organisations.
5. Perform some sort of counterfactual analysis (probably using systematic reviews/mixed methods/triangulation) to determine whether having monitoring and evaluation systems in place transformed into some sort of policy change/ improvement or not, no matter what sector/ indicators you are taking into the consideration. The scale and breadth of such analysis would be dependent upon various factors (including but not limited to resources, expertise, priority areas, number of interventions to account for).
6. Monitoring data collected at a project level can easily be aggregated at the sectoral level, getting the sectoral plan to feed back into the national strategic plan.
7. The extent to which monitoring and evaluation actions, recommendations and decisions are implemented. So that if zero of those are implemented then we approximate the impact of monitoring and evaluation to be zero. If 50% are implemented then we approximate the impact to 50 %  etc.
8. The extent to which the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is realized for example, better understanding of the gaps, challenges, emerging needs, changes in situations, etc.  The extent of the achievement can be rated and levels of achievement determined that can be approximated to the impacts created in that context.
9. Adopting outcome harvesting (mixed with another approach like contribution tracing) one would be able to trace the impact of monitoring and evaluation system. Choice of outcome harvesting is because it does not measure progress towards a predetermined objective, but rather collects evidence of what has changed and then work backward to trace a plausible relationship between the change and an intervention contribution to this change. If government proposes an agricultural bank, this can be traced back to recommendations from some monitoring and evaluation effort or if agricultural insurance policy, this policy change can be traced to (i) The project Intervention; (ii) Project monitoring and evaluation efforts (iii) Environment and what it means for agriculture etc.
10. **Challenges that may affect the assessment of impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation outcomes**

The key challenges that may affect the assessment of impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation are:

1. The challenge of measuring monitoring and evaluation work is just a symptom of a bigger problem with the national monitoring and evaluation system.
2. Little or no support for real time monitoring and reporting, hence, delays in decision-making and remedial interventions and lack of standardisation in data generation resulting in data that is of poor quality and unreliable.
3. Difficulty in accessing programme and project data and delays in submission of periodic evaluation reports by various sector agencies and ministries for quick decision-making.
4. In some cases sharing of the results of monitoring and evaluation is questionable even at the organisational level with exceptions of some very advanced learning organisations who make their reports available for the public.
5. Existing national monitoring and evaluation system not providing for adequate citizen participation.
6. Limited capacities of monitoring and evaluation personnel at all levels.
7. Some sector ministries and agencies having their own monitoring and evaluation systems which are specific to their needs and are not linked to the national monitoring and evaluation system therefore making it extremely difficult to compare and analyse national monitoring and evaluation data.
8. Evaluation is very costly and how do you show the authorities that it is value for money.
9. The monitoring and evaluation people do not have direct authority on policy. This is what evaluation voluntary organizations (VOPEs) are trying to do through awareness and lobbying with Parliamentarians and they succeeded in some countries.
10. On hardware, the majority of Government high and line staff might feel that monitoring and evaluation is just and additional "administrative" workload that is imposed from the top and lack of conviction in monitoring and evaluation will be very apparent.
11. When an action is poorly developed, either because the problems have been poorly identified / formulated or because the actions selected are inappropriate, there is a high risk that the results will be bad: low impact.
12. If the management of the implementation of the actions is not adequate, the risk of failure is still high, only that in this case, the monitoring-evaluation has more power to formulate remedies that, if taken into account, can lead to the right result.
13. Generally, monitoring and evaluation are not liked and everything is done to prevent from working well.
14. **Proposed Actions**

The following proposed actions can enable better evaluation of impact or value addition or contribution of monitoring and evaluation outcomes:

1. Practitioners in developing countries need international support in order to upgrade the skills and methods. This is because evaluation is not a uniform effort, it keeps changing all the time in terms of methods, approaches, norms, standards etc.
2. Make impact of monitoring and evaluation important, vital and create demand for monitoring and evaluation culture of evaluation and key activities can fall under three broad areas: enabling environment, institutional capacity, and individual capacity in the country at all levels from national to sub national government.
3. Raise awareness on impact of monitoring and evaluation outcomes to all via languages they understand. i.e. legislation, individuals and institutional level too and disseminating monitoring and evaluation results is highly recommended.
4. Review the methodology of developing actions in the country to incorporate aspects of impact assessments and developing a comprehensive or strengthening existing monitoring and evaluation system would entail developing a national monitoring and evaluation framework which would define the theory of change, results chain, indicators etc. to ensure effective coordination and efficient management by developing a comprehensive, functional and integrated national monitoring and evaluation system that covers all levels of governance (national, district, sub-district), institutions (including sector ministries), projects and programs implementations.
5. Having impact assessment backed by a legislative instrument/directive to ensure active participation of all stakeholders including Government leaders (Parliamentarians, Ministers and others). If the country does not have a Policy on Evaluation it is necessary to develop it in order to create the legally bonded “must” culture.
6. Coming up with some framework of indicators that can be used to identify who does monitoring and evaluation better due to its better influence for better impact.
7. Locating a national monitoring and evaluation system within the broader planning strategy and linking the system to the different efforts would help in aggregating all monitoring and evaluation efforts. This might be able to measure the impact of monitoring and evaluation work, maybe by producing an annual series of Reports on Impact of monitoring and evaluation for government "The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Outlook".
8. **Conclusion**

Impact evaluation of monitoring and evaluation outcomes is possible though little experience seems to exist in this area. It is necessary to raise awareness on how to appreciate the contribution of monitoring and evaluation outcomes. This piece provides an opportunity through which the subject of assessing monitoring and evaluation outcomes can expanded so that the outcomes inform better policy implementation and other interventions for better impact on the citizens and transformation of countries.

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