

# The Impact of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems on the Daily Implementation and Management Efficiency of ADRA Projects in Somalia

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**Abstract:** Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are vital for managing projects effectively, as they help assess and improve the impact of various initiatives. These systems provide immediate feedback, enabling managers to make adjustments to improve outcomes. However, despite the importance of M&E in ensuring project success, gaps still exist in Somalia, where some projects fail even with active M&E efforts. The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of M&E systems on the daily implementation and management efficiency of ADRA projects in Somalia. The study was guided by the Results Based Management (RBM) theory. It employed a descriptive research design, using stratified and purposive sampling to select M&E members and project managers. The findings revealed several inefficiencies in ADRA's M&E systems. Delayed and incomplete reports hinder timely decision-making, while generic recommendations fail to address specific project challenges. Inconsistent standards and outdated data also impact project quality, making it difficult for managers to rely on M&E information. Overall, these issues point to significant shortcomings in the system's ability to provide timely, relevant, and actionable insights necessary for effective project management. The study concludes that ADRA's M&E team needs substantial improvement in data analysis, risk management, and communication to enhance project planning and resource allocation. The study recommends that ADRA should consider upgrading its M&E systems to ensure timely and accurate data delivery. The system should also be refined to provide specific, actionable recommendations rather than generic advice.

**Keywords:** ADRA, Monitoring, Evaluation, Management, Efficiency, Project.

## 1. Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems form the backbone of effective initiative management. These systems, integral to the project or program management cycle, serve as fundamental tools for assessing and improving the impact of various endeavors (Onyango, 2015). Their primary purpose is to systematically gather and analyze data to track the progress of activities, providing valuable insights that inform decision-making throughout the initiative's lifespan. By doing so, M&E systems contribute significantly to the overarching goal of ensuring accountability in the implementation of projects or

programs.

The significance of M&E systems lies in their ability to provide data-driven insights that go beyond mere progress tracking (Custer, King, Atinc, Read & Sethi, 2018). These systems enable a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the success of initiatives. By identifying challenges and successes, project managers can refine strategies, allocate resources effectively, and address issues promptly. This continuous learning process contributes to the overall improvement of initiative implementation, fostering an environment of adaptability and responsiveness to changing circumstances.

According to Belassi and Tukel (1996), a comprehensive planning process, which includes identifying tasks, allocating resources, and establishing timelines, is crucial for the success of any project. Thorough planning ensures that the project team has a clear understanding of the tasks at hand, allowing for a systematic approach to achieving project goals. This involves not only outlining what needs to be done but also determining how resources, including human, financial, and material resources, will be allocated to support these tasks. Adequate resource allocation is vital to ensure that the necessary manpower, financial funds, and materials are available when needed, facilitating the smooth execution of project activities.

The hallmark of successful projects lies not only in risk identification but also in the implementation of proactive measures to mitigate these identified risks (Godschalk, 2003). Rather than merely reacting to challenges as they arise, successful project teams take a forward-thinking stance. They develop and implement strategies designed to minimize the likelihood of risks materializing or to mitigate their impact should they occur. This anticipatory approach enhances a project's resilience, providing a buffer against unforeseen challenges. Consequently, the project is better equipped to navigate complexities and uncertainties, maintaining a trajectory toward successful completion.

Project management in Somalia, like in many other regions, involves planning, executing, monitoring, and closing

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initiatives to achieve specific goals within a set time frame and budget. However, the context in Somalia presents unique challenges and considerations due to historical, social, and economic factors, as well as ongoing security and humanitarian concerns.

Infrastructure development, humanitarian aid, and resilience-building projects are crucial components of project management in Somalia (Kettunen, 2021). These initiatives aim to address the significant gaps in basic services caused by years of conflict and instability. Project managers need to implement sustainable solutions that not only provide immediate relief but also contribute to long-term development. Capacity building within local institutions and communities is vital, empowering them to take ownership of projects and fostering self-sufficiency. Collaborative efforts with international donors, non-governmental organizations, and governmental bodies are key in creating a coordinated and impactful project management framework that addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by Somalia.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has been actively involved in humanitarian efforts in Somalia, a country marked by a complex blend of historical challenges, ongoing conflicts, and recurrent humanitarian crises (Hirata, Peach & Tobing, 2021). ADRA, with its commitment to serving vulnerable communities, has sought to address pressing needs and contribute to sustainable development in Somalia.

Despite the widespread agreement among scholars that effective monitoring and evaluation is instrumental in attaining project accomplishment, a noticeable gap persists in Somalia, where instances of project failure are still evident (Abdirahman, 2022). This trend endures even in the presence of substantial M&E activities. This contradiction raises significant concerns regarding the efficacy of the monitoring and evaluation processes employed in ensuring project success. The persistence of project failures, despite active monitoring and evaluation, prompts a critical examination of whether the existing systems are sufficiently robust to meet the objectives of project implementation. The current paper looks into how monitoring and evaluation systems can help manage effective implementation of ADRA projects in Somalia.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The current study is guided by Results Based Management (RBM) theory. Its main focus is achieving outcomes and impacts by prioritizing clear planning, effective monitoring, and rigorous evaluation throughout the project life cycle (Lainjo, 2019). The UN has been a major proponent of RBM, especially through its agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UN adopted RBM in the 1990s as part of its efforts to enhance the efficiency and accountability of its programs and operations. This theory asserts that by defining and aligning clear outcomes and impacts, projects can enhance their overall effectiveness and accountability. The concept of performance measurement in RBM which focuses on establishment of clear and relevant indicators to monitor progress toward desired outcomes, will be crucial. By setting and regularly monitoring performance

indicators, the M&E team can gain insights into the efficiency of daily project activities. This tenet ensures that ADRA's projects are on track and that adjustments can be made promptly, contributing to improved implementation and overall project management effectiveness.

## 3. Literature Review

Mleke and Dida (2020) conducted a survey in Tanzania, specifically focusing on government projects within the healthcare industry. They explored the use of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, which are tools utilized globally to monitor project track and assess results. Strengthening these systems is crucial for enhancing organizational performance, effectiveness, and ultimately achieving successful project results. Their discoveries underscored a deficiency in the uptake of information and communication technology in M&E activities within government organizations. The Ministry of Health in Tanzania, for instance, relies on manual methods for monitoring and evaluating projects, leading to risks and challenges during implementation due to a lack of timely corrective actions. Manual data compilation, delays in data submission, and a lack of comprehensive project details in the system were identified as key issues. While Mleke and Dida concentrated on government health projects in Tanzania, the present study is centered on the effectiveness of M&E systems in project implementation at ADRA in Somalia.

Jamaal (2018) investigated the impact of PM&E on project performance at the KMFRI in Mombasa, Kenya. PM&E is a strategic management approach that provides tools and techniques for managers, employees, and stakeholders at various levels. However, the study revealed that PM&E practices were not fully embraced by KMFRI managers, leading to challenges in effective project implementation and achieving excellence in project performance. The findings indicated that when PM&E is actively adopted, it involves involving stakeholders in collaborative planning and evaluating progress, which helps in successfully finishing projects. Financial capital was identified as crucial for project viability, and participatory M&E facilitated financial mobilization by communities, enhancing project success. Rigorous pre-planning in total quality management projects was also linked to successful project performance and the ability to influence daily practices. The review of Jamaal's study provided insights into the challenges and benefits associated with implementing PM&E in the specific context of ADRA projects in Somalia.

Apondi (2023) explored the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices in Nairobi County's health sector on project growth and performance. The study aimed to understand how performance measurement and M&E approaches affect senior management commitment, capacity building, budget allocation, and stakeholder involvement. It found that while M&E systems had clear objectives, the qualifications and ongoing training of M&E team members were inconsistent. The study revealed that adequate funding and effective subdivision of M&E responsibilities significantly improved project performance. Additionally, senior management's involvement, including financial support and

continuous training for M&E staff, was crucial for the success of health projects in Nairobi County. The study suggests that adopting a strong M&E culture at the senior management level is essential for aligning project objectives with outcomes and ensuring proper guidance throughout the project. The review benefited the current study by highlighting the importance of well-defined M&E objectives, continuous training, and senior management support in enhancing project performance.

Kamau and Mohamed (2015) examine the usefulness of M&E in attaining project accomplishment in Kenya. The research aimed to examine existing literature on critical success factors influencing project success. The analysis revealed a consistent presence of certain factors in multiple studies, with M&E functions being one such factor. Using a literature review approach, the researchers categorized factors related to M&E that influence project success into four main groups: The effectiveness of the M&E team, monitoring methods, political factors, and project stage were identified as key factors. Additionally, the study emphasized the significance of managerial backing as a mediator between M&E activities and project outcomes. It stressed that while a strong M&E framework is essential, it may not necessarily ensure project success without sufficient management support. The current study aims to build upon the findings of Kamau and Mohamed (2015) by exploring the impact of M&E systems on the daily implementation and management of projects in the context of ADRA, Somalia.

Njuki, Kaaria, Chitsike & Sanginga (2006) explored the potential contributions of Studying the impact of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) systems on project performance, ownership, success, and the enhancement of local decision-making processes. Their research aimed to determine if these systems could increase the accountability of formal research and development organizations to communities, thereby enhancing the delivery of project outputs and outcomes. Preliminary findings from the study revealed that scientists are increasingly employing PM&E processes to involve stakeholders in collaborative planning, setting common objectives, and collectively evaluating progress. Researchers are increasingly responsive to the interests of stakeholders, modifying project goals, results, and measurements according to stakeholder preferences. Within communities, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) information is employed to tailor project actions, determine community projects, and oversee the execution of activities.

Nditiye (2020) examined the factors influencing the implementation of M&E systems in government organizations, using the National Identification Authority (NIDA) as a case study. The study emphasized the importance of integrating M&E planning into the early stages of project development, ensuring the presence of an M&E system before project initiation, providing clear roles and responsibilities for M&E experts, recognizing the significance of M&E skills in offering valuable guidance during project implementation, and emphasizing qualifications in the recruitment process of M&E personnel.

Bisimwa (2022) investigated how monitoring and evaluation

practices impact the performance of health projects in South Kivu, DRC, focusing on the Programme National de Lutte contre le Sida (PNLS). The research revealed a notable correlation between the implementation of monitoring and evaluation methods and the overall performance of projects within the organization. In simpler terms, this implies that when monitoring and evaluation practices are increased, it positively influences project performance. The research proposes that the company ought to regularly train its staff members, and the administration should allocate ample funds to guarantee the successful execution of monitoring and evaluation methods. The current study benefited from this review by gaining insights into diverse sectors and project types, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the function of M&E in the execution and oversight of projects.

Garley, Eckert, Sie, Ye, Malm, Afari, & Ye (2016) discuss an initiative aimed at enhancing the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity for malaria in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). As efforts to control malaria intensify in countries where it is common, there is a growing demand for a strong M&E system to accurately gauge progress and achievements. The authors emphasize the importance of providing program and M&E officials with the necessary abilities to enhance M&E systems. for malaria and improve the utilization of information in program implementation. While Garley et al. (2016) concentrate on Enhancing the ability to monitor and evaluate malaria in sub-Saharan Africa, the study extended this focus to assess the practical implications of M&E systems on project implementation within a specific organizational context.

Onyango (2019) notes that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks help measure and analyze project activities. However, there is a gap in how these frameworks are designed to generate and use information during the M&E process for future projects. The study found that aspects such as result-based performance, learning capacity, participatory tracking, and beneficiary accountability each significantly impact project success. Among these, learning capacity was the most closely related to successful project implementation, followed by result-based performance, participatory tracking, and beneficiary accountability. The study recommends that M&E practitioners should receive proper training to effectively use these tools and enhance their understanding.

Ahmed (2022) conducted a study in Somalia to assess how M&E practices impact the effectiveness of water points within an Agro-pastoral project. The study sought to assess how M&E activities affect the efficiency of water points within this project's particular setting. The results revealed that using M&E outcomes had the greatest influence on project success, with M&E training, data management, and M&E planning also contributing positively. Overall, the research concludes that M&E practices significantly contribute to enhancing project performance. This review enhanced the current study by offering a comparative perspective and potentially identifying unique factors influencing project success within the ADRA context. Overall, this comparative analysis contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of M&E systems in diverse project settings, benefiting both academic research

and practical project management.

#### 4. Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design and employed a qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted with project managers and M&E members to gather data. To ensure representation from different sectors, 10 projects were selected using a stratified sampling method. Within each stratum, purposive sampling was applied to choose 8 respondents, making a total of 80 respondents who were essential for meeting the study's objectives. This purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on individuals with valuable insights and experiences related to monitoring and evaluation practices in ADRA's projects. The selection criteria included respondents who were willing and able to contribute effectively. Data from the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis.

#### 5. Results and Discussion

The findings indicated that delayed and incomplete reports from the M&E systems hinder timely decision-making, indicating inefficiencies in data delivery. It was also highlighted that while issues are identified, the solutions offered are often too generic, limiting their effectiveness in addressing specific project challenges. Concerns were also raised about the inconsistency and unclear standards used by the M&E systems, leading to variability in project quality and outcomes. Additionally, managers expressed difficulty in relying on M&E data for critical decisions due to its outdated or incomplete nature. These responses imply significant shortcomings in the efficiency and effectiveness of ADRA's M&E systems, as they fail to provide timely, relevant, and reliable information necessary for optimal project management.

Varied insights regarding the role of M&E systems in identifying and addressing challenges during project implementation were provided. It was noted that the M&E systems do identify issues but often fail to provide specific and actionable solutions, making it difficult to address these challenges effectively. The interviews further indicated that while the systems flag problems, the recommendations are usually too broad and not tailored to the unique needs of their projects. Additionally, some managers expressed frustration over the time it takes to receive reports, which delays their ability to respond to issues promptly.

These responses indicate that while the M&E systems have some capability to detect problems, their effectiveness is compromised by a lack of specificity and timeliness in their recommendations. This analysis highlights a critical gap in the efficiency and effectiveness of ADRA's M&E systems, emphasizing the need for more precise and timely interventions to better support project implementation and management efficiency. According to Kusek and Rist (2004), effective M&E systems are essential for providing timely and relevant information that supports decision-making and problem-solving in project management. When M&E systems can accurately detect issues and offer specific, actionable solutions,

they enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of projects (Hatry, 2006). However, if these systems provide generic recommendations or suffer from delays, their ability to address challenges is significantly weakened. This aligns with the RBM focus on achieving desired outcomes through systematic monitoring and evaluation, highlighting the need for robust M&E practices that can promptly and precisely tackle project issues to ensure success.

Regarding how the M&E systems contribute to maintaining the quality and standards of their projects, it was mentioned that the M&E systems do help in tracking project quality, but the benchmarks used are often unclear, leading to inconsistent standards and variable project outcomes. In addition, while the systems are intended to ensure quality, the data they provide is sometimes outdated, making it difficult to maintain high standards throughout the project life cycle. Some managers also highlighted that the recommendations from the M&E team are not always actionable or specific enough to address the unique needs of each project, which further affects the consistency and reliability of maintaining quality standards. These responses suggest that while the M&E systems have the potential to support quality assurance, their current inefficiencies and lack of specificity undermine their effectiveness.

Project managers shared varied responses regarding situations where the M&E system significantly improved project efficiency at ADRA. One manager cited an instance where the M&E system quickly identified a resource allocation issue, allowing the team to reassign resources effectively and avoid project delays. Another manager described how timely data from the M&E system helped streamline communication between departments, enhancing coordination and reducing redundant efforts. However, some managers pointed out that such instances are rare, and the M&E system often fails to provide actionable insights in a timely manner. These responses illustrate that while the M&E system has the potential to improve project efficiency, its inconsistent performance and occasional delays in delivering actionable data limit its overall effectiveness.

Hatry (2014) indicates that an effective M&E system should provide reliable and timely data to enhance decision-making processes and project outcomes. The variability in the system's performance suggests a gap in achieving the efficiency and effectiveness tenet of results-based management (RBM), which emphasizes the importance of consistent, high-quality data for optimizing project planning and execution. Improving the reliability and timeliness of the M&E system's outputs is essential to ensure it can consistently support efficient and effective project management.

The findings further indicated that the M&E systems have built-in communication features, such as automated updates and shared dashboards, which are intended to streamline information flow. However, they noted that these features often malfunction or are not user-friendly, leading to misunderstandings and delays. Another response highlighted that while the systems provide a centralized platform for data sharing, the lack of real-time updates and inadequate training for users hampers effective coordination. Some managers

pointed out that communication breakdowns occur because the systems do not integrate well with other tools used by the team, resulting in fragmented information and duplicated efforts. These responses reveal that while the M&E systems have the potential to enhance communication and coordination, their current limitations and usability issues undermine their effectiveness. Improving these systems by addressing technical faults, enhancing user training, and ensuring better integration with other tools is crucial for fostering more efficient collaboration and information sharing among team members and stakeholders.

The respondents were further questioned on specific features of the M&E systems they find most useful for managing project timelines and milestone. highlighted that real-time tracking tools are particularly valuable for monitoring progress and ensuring that project activities remain on schedule. These tools allow for timely adjustments and resource reallocation when necessary. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of milestone tracking features, which help in breaking down the project into manageable segments and keeping track of critical deadlines. However, some managers pointed out limitations in the system's ability to integrate with other project management tools, which can lead to discrepancies and inefficiencies in timeline management. The responses suggest that while certain features of the M&E systems, such as real-time tracking and milestone management, are beneficial, there are areas for improvement, particularly in enhancing system integration and addressing limitations that impact effective timeline and milestone management.

Regarding how the M&E systems impact the allocation and utilization of project resources observed that the M&E systems often provide delayed updates on resource usage, which makes it challenging to adjust allocations promptly and effectively. In addition, while the M&E systems track resource expenditures, the reports frequently lack detailed insights into resource efficiency, leading to substandard utilization. Some managers pointed out that the M&E systems sometimes offer recommendations that are too broad or not tailored to the specific needs of different project components, reducing their usefulness in resource allocation decisions. Additionally, there were concerns that the data provided by the M&E systems does not always reflect real-time changes, making it difficult to respond quickly to emerging resource needs. These responses suggest that the M&E systems currently have limitations in supporting efficient and effective resource allocation and utilization.

In discussing the impact of M&E systems on overall project performance and outcomes, project managers shared varied experiences that highlight both strengths and weaknesses. It was noted that while the M&E systems offer valuable data, the infrequent updates and occasional inaccuracies have led to minimal adjustments and missed opportunities for enhancing project outcomes. It was also mentioned that although the M&E systems help in tracking progress, their recommendations often lack specificity, which limits their effectiveness in driving substantial improvements in project performance. Furthermore, some managers indicated that the data from the M&E systems

sometimes conflicts with on-ground realities, causing confusion and impacting the reliability of project assessments. These experiences reveal that while the M&E systems contribute to monitoring and evaluating projects, their current limitations—such as delays in reporting, lack of detailed recommendations, and occasional data inaccuracies—hinder their ability to significantly improve overall project performance and outcomes.

In response to the question about improvements or changes needed to enhance the effectiveness of the current M&E systems in project management, project managers provided several insightful suggestions. It was proposed that the M&E systems should incorporate more advanced data analytics tools to provide deeper insights and more actionable recommendations. This improvement would address the issue of generic solutions and enhance the system's ability to offer tailored responses to specific project needs. Another suggestion was to ensure that the M&E systems provide real-time data updates to improve the timeliness and accuracy of information, which would facilitate more effective decision-making. Managers also recommended clarifying and standardizing the metrics used for quality assessment to ensure consistency across projects, thereby addressing the problem of variability in project outcomes. Additionally, there was a call for improved training for M&E team members to better interpret data and communicate findings effectively. These suggested improvements aim to address the current inefficiencies and effectiveness gaps, aligning the M&E systems more closely with the goals of efficient and effective project management.

Kusek and Rist (2004) argue that incorporating advanced data analytic tools would allow for more detailed and actionable insights, addressing the need for tailored solutions rather than generic ones. Real-time data updates are crucial for timely decision-making, reflecting the RBM principle that emphasizes the importance of efficient information flow (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Standardizing metrics for quality assessment ensures consistency across projects, which is essential for maintaining high standards and reliability. Improved training for M&E team members would enhance their ability to interpret and communicate data effectively, supporting the RBM goal of maximizing project outcomes through skilled management (Poister, 2010).

## 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that ADRA's M&E systems are currently failing to meet expectations in terms of supporting daily project management. Delayed and incomplete reports, along with generic recommendations, impede timely decision-making and hinder the quality of project outcomes. The lack of clear standards and outdated data exacerbate these issues, affecting the ability of project managers to maintain high standards throughout the project lifecycle. These findings point to the need for ADRA to refine its M&E systems to ensure they provide timely, specific, and actionable information. Such improvements are essential to align with Results-Based Management (RBM) principles, which emphasize systematic monitoring and continuous improvement to achieve project

success.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations to improve the performance of M&E systems on project implementation. Based on the above findings and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations to improve the performance of M&E systems on project implementation. To improve data analysis and risk management capabilities, it is recommended that ADRA invest in targeted training programs for the M&E team. These programs should focus on advanced data analysis techniques and effective risk management strategies. Additionally, enhancing communication skills within the team is crucial. Implementing workshops on clear and effective communication will help ensure that findings and recommendations are conveyed in a manner that is actionable and comprehensible. By addressing these areas, ADRA can strengthen its M&E team's capacity, leading to more effective project planning and resource allocation.

To address issues such as delayed and incomplete reports, ADRA should consider upgrading its M&E systems to ensure timely and accurate data delivery. The system should also be refined to provide specific, actionable recommendations rather than generic advice. Establishing clear standards for data reporting and integrating real-time data analysis tools can help maintain high quality throughout the project lifecycle. These improvements will better support daily project management and align with the Results-Based Management (RBM) principles of systematic monitoring and continuous improvement.

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