Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation of Family and Community Development Program:
The Case of SOS Children's Village, Addis Ababa

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Abstract

The study entitled as" Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation System at Family and Community Development Program (FCDP): The Case of SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa"which made its scope of time to the years of 2016 and 2017. Thus, the study tried to unveil how M&E is done and what are influential factors for the system in SOS Children's Village of Family and Community Development Program that can be taken as illumination of how M&E is done in similar programs and projects. To this end, it made use of a qualitative Descriptive Research Design. Data for the study purpose was collected using interview, focus group discussion and document review from both primary and secondary sources. Accordingly, the study required participants such as Program Location Director, MERA Officer, Program Location Finance Manager, Program Coordinator(Program under the study, FCDP), two Community Based Officers, and a focused group discussion (FGD) with beneficiaries as they are called target group of from local Idir, and from key implementation partners. Number of participants in the focused group discussion was five, three from beneficiaries and two from key implementation partners known as Lewegen Derash Charity association. Thus, the study employed purposive sampling technique.The study revealed that the M&E system of FCDP is engaged on the establishment of the frameworks for the system so as to be part and parcel of each activities of the program. The program uses multiple tools, methods and indicators which make their base from SOS international with minor customization. Reports, review meetings, self-assessment and field visits were found to be ways of M&E activities were conducted. The study unveiled that perception to M&E, nature of the program, training to employees, management support, selection of tools and stakeholders' involvement are influential factors of the M&E system.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Though related to each other, monitoring and Evaluation are two separate practices dedicated to the assessment of organizational overall performance. Monitoring is a systematic process that gathers and analyzes information in regard to the progress made by an implemented project or program or policy. It aims to answer the question "did we deliver?" Monitoring clarifies program objective. It uses to keep the work on the track and provide a baseline for evaluation. It enables to decide on whether the sufficient resources are available and are being utilized well and whether objectives are translated in accordance with set of targets and activities planned (Sharpiro, 2011).

Evaluation is the objective assessment or comparison of actual project results of an ongoing or recently completed project, program or policy against the agreed strategic plan on its design, implementation and result. It tries to answer the question "what has happened as a result?" It examines implementation process and analyzes why the intended results were or were not achieved. It can be formative i.e., taking place on the ongoing project before its completion so as to explore improved way of functioning or strategy, or it can be summative i.e., on completed project so as to get lessons (Alex, 2016).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a process that helps improve performance and achieve results. Its goal is to improve current and future management of output, outcomes and impact. It establishes links between the past, present and future actions. Thus M&E should be done carefully against well-established planning to assess progress and achievement (UNDP, 2002).

It would be thus appropriate to inquire into the monitoring and evaluation trends of organizational performances. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the Monitoring and Evaluation practices of SOS Children's Village. SOS Children's Villages Ethiopia (SOS CVE) is a member of the Federation of SOS Children's Villages International and started its activities in Ethiopia in the year 1974. SOS Children's Village Ethiopia started its work in Tigray Region following severe drought and famine occurred in 1973 in Northern Ethiopia. Since then, it has opened six more programs in areas where its

support was most needed and currently operating in seven regions in the country, namely Tigray, Harari, Southern Nations Nationalities and peoples, Amhara, Ethio-Somali, Oromia and Addis Ababa City Council. Each of these branches of SOS Children's Village Ethiopia are called Program Locations. The SOS CVE addresses the needs of children who have lost parental care and those at risk of losing the care of their families by ensuring equal access to essential services of care, education and health. Today, it runs over 50 projects and programs in Ethiopia including SOS Children's Villages, Youth Projects, Family and Community Development Programs, kindergarten, Day Care Centers, Primary and Secondary Schools, Vocational Training centers, SOS Farm and Medical Center. It is a non-political, non-religious social development organization focused on the wellbeing and development of children. It provides specialist care and support for orphaned and abandoned children through the SOS Children's Villages and supports children, young persons and families in need through its programs. It also advocates and promotes the rights of children throughout the country. SOS Children's Village Ethiopia currently has eight hundred fifty (850) employees at national level whereas SOS Children's Village of Addis Ababa, which is the setting of the current study, has ninety three (93) employees.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Monitoring and Evaluation is a significant component of any project, program or policy. Monitoring is a systematic and long term process that collects, analyzes and uses information from projects and programs. This process has three basic functions:

➢ Learning function i.e. taking lessons from the acquired experiences
➢ Monitoring function i.e. determination on the resources used and the result gained.
➢ Steering function i.e. decision making function

Evaluation on the other hand examine systematically and objectively a certain project or program or policy based on the information collected through monitoring process. The information collected usually encompasses relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of an intervention. Thus based on this information it is possible to determine where the improvements and modification are needed and what is going well or

otherwise. Hence evaluation incorporates monitoring and learning functions (Mekdim, 2012)

Monitoring and evaluation as a result facilitates informed decision about certain project based on objective evidence, explore effective and efficient ways of resource utilization, objectively evaluate the strength and weak areas of the project, assess to what extent the desired impact is achieved, what level of modification is needed and enable to easily understand whether strategic changes need to be made and act accordingly. Also monitoring and evaluation helps to meet organizational reporting and convince donors and other stakeholders that their investment has a worth.

SOS Children's Village Ethiopia has monitoring and evaluation system but the performance of this system has not been studied yet. Thus the student researcher will assess the status of the monitoring and evaluation practice of SOS Children's Village and will generate valuable information for the organization so as to strengthen its Monitoring and Evaluation system. In addition to this the student researcher worked at SOS Children's Village of Addis Ababa for two months as an intern which the student researcher showed an interest to the area of the subject under the study.

1.3. Research Questions

The study intends to answer the following three interrelated questions:

i)   How is Monitoring & Evaluation done at Family and Community Development Program of SOS Children's Village?
ii)   What tools and methods are used in Monitoring and Evaluation Systems at Family and Community Development Program of SOS Children's Village?
iii)   What factors affect Monitoring & Evaluation performance of Family and Community Development Program of SOS Children's Village?

Inquiring into these questions, the study attempted to come up with findings on the status of M & E at SOS Children's village whose trends and experiences may serve as illuminating case in understanding the M & E trends and status of other similar organizations in Ethiopia.

1.4. Research Objectives

1.4.1. General Objective

The overall objective of the study was to assess the Monitoring and Evaluation system of Family and Community Development Program in the case of SOS Children's Village of Addis Ababa.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The Study Particularly Sought:

i) To examine the implementation of monitoring and evaluation.
ii) To explore the tools and methods used in monitoring and evaluation system of Family and Community Development Program at SOS Children's Village of Addis Ababa.
iii) To identify factors affecting monitoring & evaluation system of Family and Community Development Program of SOS Children's Village, Addis Ababa.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design. A descriptive study allows for an understanding of a particular phenomenon as it exists in the present situation(Cooper and Schindler,2008).Objectives are predetermined allowing data collection relevant and sufficient to the study problem in descriptive design(Kothari,2004).

3.1.2. Population and Sampling Technique

The population is the entire of group of people the researchers want to investigate. The population for the study was SOS Children's Village, Addis Ababa office members. The main focusing area of the study was the monitoring and evaluation practices of Family and Community Strengthening program. Thus to reach sound conclusions and forward the samples selected were those are believed to be directly related with the study on hand using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is the most productive sample in qualitative research (Tilahun, 2009).

3.1.3. Types of Data Collected

Data for the study was collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from key informants and the secondary data was collected from the available written materials of the program.

2.1.4. Data Collection Method

Primary data for the study was collected through an interview with key informants to elicit information from senior managements, Monitoring and Evaluation officers of the program of the organization and focused group discussion composed of five participants obtained through reference. The participants of focused group discussion were selected through reference of program location coordinator and then snow balling method was employed to find more participants. Once the participants were composed, the student researcher used unstructured question for focused group discussion participants who were stakeholders of the program (key implementation Partners and from local Idir). Specifically, the study employed a semi-structured interview-guide that enabled the student researcher to raise questions that came into discussion during the actual interview. Because "…..every interview is an interpersonal dram with developing plot (Tilahun, 2007).And secondary was collected through careful consultation of written materials.

3.1.5. Data Analysis Method

The collected data from both primary and secondary sources was analyzed and interpreted through triangulation of information. The collected data was analyzed through qualitative data analysis methods.

Qualitative methodology was employed because this methodology, in contrast to quantitative research, which takes a phenomenon into parts, strives to understand the meaning of an experience. The aim is to go into a definable setting in which phenomena can be placed meaningfully within a specific environment. Such an environment can be groups of people, institutions, cases, geographic areas, communities, texts and so on (Tilahun, 2007). The selection of methodology dependent on the nature of the subject under the study."….the subject under the study is the determining factor for choosing method and not the other way round *(Ibid)."* Thus the student

researcher employed this method since it is a methodology of the development of concepts which help as to understand social phenomena in natural(rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meaning ,experience and views of participants(Tilahun,2009).

3.1.6. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

3.1.7 Selection of Participants

The research questions stated above required the following six individuals who have direct touch with monitoring and evaluation of the organization generally and the program under the study specifically. Once the interview was started using purposive sampling, the interview held with one official helped the student researcher to find another interviewee through snow balling technique.

The information regarding monitoring and evaluation practices (M&E) at SOS Children's Village Family and Community Development Program (FCD) was gathered through qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and document review.

Who were the Participants then?: Six in-depth interviews were conducted with the Program Location Director (PLD), Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Analysis Section Officer(MERA officer), Finance Manager of the Village, Family and Community Development Program Coordinator, and two Community Development Officers (CBOs). Among participants of the interview four of them are female (MERA Officer, Finance Manager and two CBOs) and two of them are male. Except two the CBOs who have first degree, all of them are Master Degree holders in their academic status.

In addition to the interview the Focus group discussion with the beneficiaries who are compiled from key implementation partners of the program (i.e., Lewegen Derash Charity Association) and from the local Idir was conducted. There were five participants for the focused group discussion i.e., three from beneficiaries and two from key implementation partner aforementioned.

How the Interview is Held?

With regard to *informed consent*, the student researcher has no single research participant who was unaware of his/her involvement in this study.

Thus for better confidentiality there was interview consent signed between student researcher and each participants.

Both the interview and focused group discussion were held in Amharic which later translated into English. The focused group discussion and in-depth interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed through listening again and again. The transcripts were analyzed by repeated reading and summarizing of responses from different respondents question by question. Who says what, whether the view is frequently mentioned by other respondents or is isolated one and the ability of the respondents to give substantive examples and explanation is taken into account in the interpretation process the results thematically relevant information extracted from the document review was described and summarized.

Review of program documents included the logical framework, the baseline survey findings monthly, quarterly, bi-annual and annual reports and weekly and monthly plan formats different check lists of data collection tools, monitoring tools and field visit tools. Finally attempt was made to triangulate or validate findings from the qualitative interviews and document review.

The data generated through interview and document review are presented and analyzed here in this chapter under three major themes: How M&E is done at FCD, tools and Methods used and factors influence the M&E system of FCD. Each of these major themes has other subthemes that go further deep into the major themes raised.

How M&E Is Conducted at FCD Program
For better understanding of how M&E is done at FCD program, it is appropriate to understand the objective of the program first. Thus herewith the brief discussion:

Objectives of FCD Program

Family and Community Development program is among the programs of SOS Children's Village, Addis Ababa. The program has a general objective of contributing in the reduction of child abandonment and neglect. To meet this objective the program specifically engaged in providing support for children's immediate need, strengthening the capacity of families and community. This is because Programs are usually time framed that will phase

out at the end. But families and the community are the one who remain consistently and sustainably with the children. The FCDP coordinator explained this as:

We are working with families and the local community to empower them in the reduction of Child abandonment and neglect. We are not the one who remain with consistency and sustainability with the children since our support is a time framed. Therefore we are creating and empowering an institutionalized body who can continue our activities in absence of us. In this regard we are closely working with Idirs to make them developmental institutions beyond funeral service provider in order to ensure sustainability. Thus we were successful in this regard that we abled to establish an association known as Lewegen Derash Charity Association and SACO that are capable of continuing the activities in absence of us. Also through partnership and networking there are different governmental, non-governmental and religious institutions we are working with.

M&E Planning Process at FCD
According to literatures every M&E activity starts with planning. Thus the FCD Program of SOS CV, Addis Ababa has the M& E plan which passes through a certain process. FCD program coordinator and the staffs prepare the proposal and submit to the program location management that includes MERA section too. The plan proposal will be first approved at program location level and sent to the National Office for approval. The National office will send the document to the Regional Office and then to International Office for final approval. This is an integral part of the proposal document submitted to the donor.

But how proposal plan prepared at program level?
Family and Community Development Program has three year project life.

➢ Document review and the interview revealed that initial assessment was conducted case by case of each family for the preparation of M&E plan proposal. Based on the assessment, vulnerable children were identified based on the criteria. s a result the baseline data is acquired. In reviewing the baseline survey document the student researcher reviewed the contents of the baseline such as the characteristics of the project,

problems of the families and community, the capacity of the partners and child protection issues of the community.

➢ aving these baselines the program prepares the end line i.e., the changes the program wants to bring on the current baselines. Between the baseline and the end line there are deliverables. These deliverables are evaluated in the mid- term evaluation process.

Planning Framework in Use

Logical frame work and result based M&E system is used both at organizational and program level. Logical framework or log frame show the causal relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts vis-à-vis the goals and objectives which has four columns and rows that link the project goals and objectives to the inputs, process and outputs required to implement the project(Mekdim,2012). It also includes overall objectives and specific objectives of the program; indicators (Objectively Verifiable Indicators, OVI and Means of Verifications, MOVs); assumptions or risks; result and activities.

Through tracking documents the student researcher found the log frame of the project with each component. Accordingly Children who are at risk of losing the care of their family are enabled to grow within a caring family environment stated as a goal of FCD program. Further the log frame contained all components.

In addition to logical frame work the result based system is also used together. Results-based monitoring is a continuous process of collecting and analyzing information to compare how well a project, program, or policy is being implemented against expected result (Kusek&Rist, 2004). SOS CV at national level use result framework. Hence, according to document reviewed and interview for the FCD Program two major results are stated at the framework in generic form. The first one says capacity of caregivers [families] should care and provide to their children and the second one states community system and structures to respond to the situation of children publicity.

Practices of M&E at FCD Program of SOS CV

The respondents answer for the question on how monitoring and evaluation done illustrated that based on the logical framework, annual plan will be prepared. The annual plan was further broken into monthly and weekly plan. On the basis of the plan every week meeting will be held despite some irregularities to have discussion on what is accomplished and what is not referring vis-a-vis the framework. From the interview and document review the researcher abled to understand that report, review meetings are major ways in which monitoring and evaluation is done both at organizational and program level. In addition to this two field visits and annual self-assessment are other practices of M&E system at organizational and program level.

Report: Every month there is reporting and the report will be updated to both PLD and NO. Monthly report contains contents of planned accomplishments of the month, unplanned achievements, challenges with recommended solutions and priorities for the next month. The quarterly, bi-annual and annual reports had more or less similar content formats. They included planned activities implemented based on objective, indicators (such as number of caregivers, number of coffee ceremonies, number of CBOs assist ,number of partners maintained, amount of money transferred for CBOs…), plan of quarterly/bi-annual/annual , activities on progress ,activities planned but not achieved, and justification for on progress and not achieved activities. For on progress and not achieved activities there is 10% tolerance of deficiency from the plan.

Review Meetings: Review meeting are discussion held on the reports so as to share ideas on achievements and deficiency of achievements. From document review and interview the study find out that Reports are prepared on monthly, quarterly, bi-annual and annual basis. The MERA officer elaborated this as:

Review and reporting are ways we use to conduct monitoring and evaluation. Review meetings are held monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual basis. It is about discussing on works to be done versus achievement. During these meetings, deficiencies and achievements are revealed and justifications will be given for the deficiencies of achievements. Also it is time to make remedial action to make activities in the pipeline.

Monitoring/Field Visits: In addition to this, monitoring field visits (both sudden and programmed) are done in order to ensure that works and activities reported in written form are available on the ground.

Self-assessment: Moreover there are mid -year and end-year (annual) self-assessment practices. During mid-year evaluation key indicators are evaluated so as to make things on the track from quality and time concerns or to check if things required to add something at the middle .The theme of mid-year evaluation usually focuses on corrective actions and adding something to make things on the track. Whereas annual self -assessment is about whether the program is working in accordance with the plan (according to the quality and time stated in the plan) .This is way of finding an input for the achievement of the objective of the program, for monitoring and evaluation system and for the next year plan. The change on the track can be content issue or data issue. Consulting with finance section there will be things to be changed which is more of programmatic issues. The program location Director explains this:*"....for example a three year program might need many things to change may be after a year and half or after two years. Therefore it is a way to track such things."* In addition to interviews, document review such as checklist for care givers, checklists for the target groups (beneficiaries) support this finding.

In addition to all this, government signatories and donors had their own monitoring and evaluation methods and tools. Frequency and regularities of M&E activities were determined by these stakeholders. Though inconsistent there was attempt to held joint M&E in mid-term and terminal evaluation.

3.1.8 Data Collection Process for M&E Purpose at FCD
In monitoring and evaluation one of the tasks is data collection. Thus what the frequency of data collection looks like is answered by all the respondents as a monthly basis since there is an update of information system in each month. This question was further probed as what types of data are gathered? All the informants mentioned that mainly key statistical figures are collected and some other program data. Big quantitative figures and other grand programmatic data are collected on quarterly basis from each program units at organizational level.

But what is to be monitored? Question of what is to be monitored was responded as; physical or program activities which are done physically (such as, Provision of food support, educational material support, Psychosocial and different trainings) provided for the children are monitored whether such activities are done on the ground as it is stated in the plan; financial monitoring (budget versus achievement); Schedule (time) and quality of service are issues to be monitored and evaluated.

Financial Monitoring: among things to be monitored and evaluated finance is the one and crucial which is inclusive in all activities of the program. Financial monitoring and evaluation mainly conducted by department of finance of the program location. Financial monitoring as the name indicates refers to monitoring project/program expenditure and comparing them with the budgets prepared at the planning stage (Kusek&Rist, 2004). It is conducted to ensure whether the allocated (planned) budget is financed or funded for the appropriate/planned activity and whether financial documents are recorded well. Thus Process of financial monitoring and evaluation also basically begins with planning. The interview revealed that when programs prepare their plan the finance unit will participate. Mostly indicators used for financial aspects are that can exhibit the relationship of budget vis-a-vis the planned activities. Thus budget versus actualization comparisons are done. The monthly and quarterly financial reports were presented on the review meetings for discussion. The usage of plan depends on other supplementary manuals like procurement guidelines and selection of target groups in order to monitor whether the selection process is based on the budget or financial capacity and whether the support is delivered properly to the beneficiaries. The finance manager elaborated this in as such way with an example as,

> for example if one program planned certain training, list of whom and how many are the trainees will be presented for the finance department. We will ensure whether the trainer had an agreement with us and whether the training is affordable and whether it is accordingly to the children and whether the training is an activity included in the plan.

This speech elaborated that it is after this process the finance department will give the consent to the programs in order to execute the training or other similar activities. Financial monitoring is important for accountability and

reporting purposes as well as for measuring financial efficiency (Gorgens&Kusek, 2009).

4. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using the program data base which has been in use since 2014. The analysis was done both in numerical and descriptive forms *"……for instance if a certain training is provided for our children, what was the training, how it was given, how many trainees were trained, and what is the outcome of the training will be analyzed both in descriptive and numerical form and aggregated in an excel spread sheet. "* the MERA officer elaborated the analysis process. Most of my informants mentioned there is a gap in using and developing this data base system. This statement will be further elaborated in the other section of this study later.

4.1 Role of Each Staff in M&E Activities

In interviews regarding the role of each staff in monitoring and evaluation reveals that the way in which each staff contribute to M&E system of the program vary. Some of informants associated the role of the staff with the availability of individual work and development plan which is considered as part of monitoring and evaluation system by the organization. This individual work and development plan is evaluated twice a year in each six months. Others associated with that the role of the staff in M&E system starts with the planning phase of the M&E plan that they perceived the plan as the sum-total effort of each staff. Further probing questions uncovered that, the role of each staff begins with reporting, while preparing monthly and quarterly reports each staff plays his/her role in forwarding the report of his/her activity. Also while field visits are conducted staffs still play their own role in showing their activities. This question still further probed as, though M&E practices are exercised by all the staff that is directly responsible for the M&E process and answered as at the organizational level there is a MERA section which has only one officer who is doing monitoring and evaluation of all program units of the organization. And program units thus conduct their monitoring and evaluation by their respective coordinators. As case of FCD Program which has believed by the informants a program which make consistent M&E with advanced monitoring and evaluation tools and methods, in charged its M&E activities to   its program coordinator with the coordination of other staffs in the program.

4.2 Use of Findings of M&E Process

Literatures show that monitoring and evaluation generally has three major functions i.e., decision making function, learning function and monitoring function. M&E not only help organizations reflect understand past performance, but serve as a guide for constructive changes during the period of implementation (Gaitano, 2011).Thus in-depth interviews revealed the organization and program under the study mostly used M&E findings for making things on the track and for making sound decision to take remedial and corrective actions and using as an input for the next planning phase of similar or other different programs. To some extent it also used for learning lessons from this specific program. In this regards there are documents which shows best practice templates .However all respondents perceived that the learning aspect from findings is not echoed louder and not given proper emphasis by the organization as a whole. Even respondents from FCD program has some doubt on the reliability and timelines of the rarely released best practices templates. Learning is a continuous dynamic process of investigation where the key elements are experience, knowledge, access and relevance (Kusek&Rist, 2004).As informants explained however the learning aspect of M&E at SOS CV is given less concern, and the typical quote for this view is:

> the learning aspect of M&E is highly ignored by the organization in fact there is templates and quarterly magazine prepared by the HR &Admin section which often includes best practices and the like but it is not on relevant time that recognition is given rather it is for the sake of fulfillment of templates.

Planning for communication as part of M& E system is a vital component (*Ibid*).All respondents commented on this as if the organization had a lot to do with developing learning aspect and establishing communication strategy for disseminating and communicating best practices magnificently since it has many advantages in motivating workers, bringing sense of ownership and more over cooperation towards achievement of objectives.

4.3Tools and Methods Used

There are different tools and methods that are applicable in the M&E system of FCD program of SOS CV. Informants mentioned that all the tools and

methods are generally designed by SOS International. But each member country cascade the tools and methods in respect to its own situational setup. Again the cascaded or the customized tools and methods are contextualized at the program location level and even at program level. Since tools and methods have influential factor on the monitoring and evaluation process, during the selection and development of tools and method all stakeholders have to be participated (Mulandi, 2013).In this regard interviews revealed that the tools are developed by the program coordinators and their staffs excluding target groups and other stake holders which they have little knowledge of the tools and methods used for monitoring and evaluation.

According to document review there are various organizational systems and tools for family and Community Development program work that have been designed to support the two key processes of the program i.e., community empowerment and family empowerment. In fact, clear links can be traced between the various FCD management tools (including those for planning, monitoring & evaluation); according to these two key processes, as indicated below:
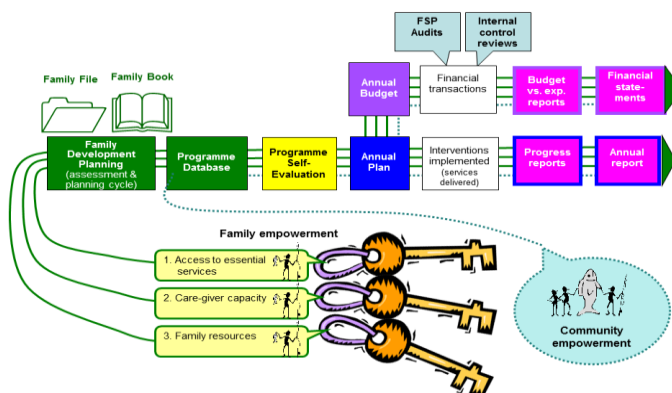

Figure 1. Link between FCD Management Tools

Source: Finance & Administration Guidelines for programmes in family strengthening In Africa & Middle East.

There are tools used for data gathering, monitoring visit tools, monitoring check lists, self-evaluation tools, CBO (Community Based Officers) health check tools and finance and admin manual tools, and finance & administration guidelines and the internal control review tool. (See Appendix IV)

Internal Control Review Tool

The finance and admin guidelines and internal control review tools are also components of program's monitoring and evaluation system as shown below.
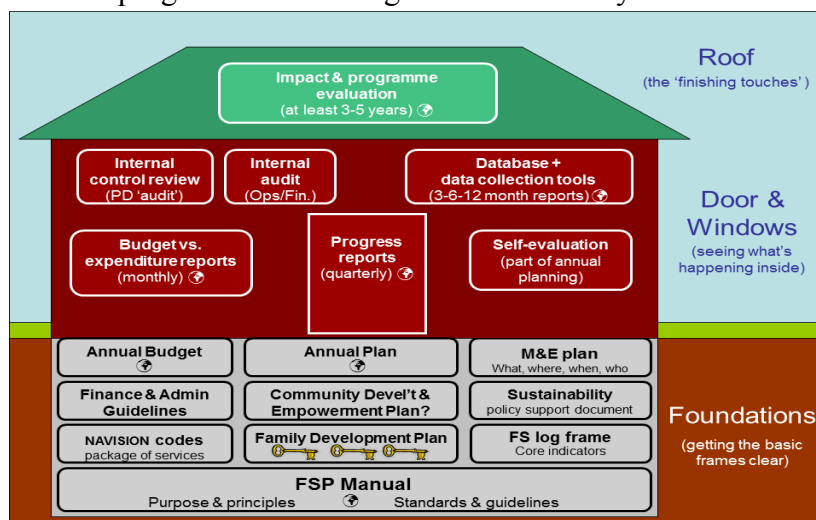

Figure 2. Components of FCDP M&E System

Source: Finance & Administration Guidelines for programmes in family strengthening in Africa & Middle East

The finance & administration guidelines form part of the 'foundations', which set the basic frames for the family and community development work. As such, they connect to other framework documents, including the FCDP Manual working paper. The internal control review and internal audit tools can then be seen as 'windows', to look at what is happening in the day-to-day administration of the program. These are complemented by other tools, such as the program database. This trend is more or less used in a cascaded fashion.

4.4 Data Collection Tool

Data collection tools usually used are program data base tracking, survey focused group discussion, interview and observation. Different data collected from different sources which are related to the program objective directly and indirectly. For instance in review of documents there is a data collection form used for assessment of families or care givers who are one of direct participant of FCD program.(See Appendix V).There is also child assessment form developed to collect data so as to assess initial status and review the

present status of the children. All the forms of the tools were originally developed by SOS International. The monitoring visit tool, self-evaluation tool and lesson learnt check lists are other tools used in the program. Also there are performance indicator and cost-benefit analysis tools used. In the program multi-tools, methods and manuals of M&E are available that make their base from SOS international children's village.

4.4.1Factors Affecting Monitoring and Evaluation System of the Program

Perception to the Concept of M&E

Perceptions of M&E vary considerably between hierarchical levels and can have a significant impact on practice. Such perceptions are also framed by individual interests and thus frequently fail to reflect the reality of M&E practice (Esther, 2002).In the organizational culture of SOS Children's Village, monitoring and evaluation is a process which has been given low concern both by management and other workers. SOS CV has started to give high concern for monitoring and evaluation system only recently since 2015. Before this period it was considered as a routine activity by the organization. However since this period onwards the organization established a MERA section separately which is exclusively responsible for M&E system. Thus the section for the past three years has been working in setting the foundation and frameworks of the system. Despite this the understanding level and the trend of the M&E system is showing growth from year to year in the organization. Moreover there is a misperception that monitoring and evaluation is a mere faultfinder activity rather than considering it as a supportive activity.

What is more, it became apparent that previous experiences with M&E activities significantly framed people's perceptions concerning the M&E processes. As these experiences were in turn determined by the hierarchical positioning of respondents within the organization, perceptions of M&E tended to vary accordingly. Informants like Program location director and MERA officer perceived M&E activities to be one of the most important stages of the program cycle and generally associated it with the notion of strengthening and sustaining institutional development. A typical comment here was *"if a certain program wants to achieve its objective, sustain its*

activities and make sound decision it is a must not a choice to strengthen its M&E system so forth." , the Program Location Director said.

The Nature of the Program

The nature of the program to be implemented is one the influential factor affecting effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation system illuminated in the interview. When programs are community based programs one should consider the custom and values of the community working with. One of the programs Community Based Officer (CBO) explained:

When you are working with the community you have to consider the value and custom of them. The program participatory (beneficiaries) have their own dignity; you will never simply enter into their home as you wish. They have their own lifestyle, their own live to lead, their own schedule. All of them are pretty busy in fulfilling their households. You cannot oblige them to conform to your schedule. Thus such things will affect the proper implementation of monitoring and evaluation system as planned.

For the social based or community based projects the M&E design have to give a concern to the custom, value and dignity of the community. The result needed from such projects has to include into account the time and the lifestyle of the respective community. In the same way the MERA officer said," *while monitoring is done in the community, it is difficult to conduct consistently. Since the time and situations of the monitoring officers is not usually compatible with the community who have their own personal issues on the other hand."* The focus group discussion with the beneficiaries uncovered that the program coordinator and officers schedules are not often compatible and previous experiences were not satisfactory.

Tools and Methods Selection

Selection of tools, methods, indicators and information in M&E systems is needed perhaps more accurately than any other, the need to acknowledge the existence of differing stakeholder information needs and multiple perspectives of reality within project interventions (Esther, 2002). However, it was readily apparent that certain contradictions exist in the selection of methods for use in M&E. First, there were contradictions between the desire of field offices (in this case FCD Program) to achieve their own specific

objectives and the obligatory use of rational management tools imposed upon them from above.

The interview with CBOs and program coordinator revealed that: *"The methods, tool and indicators a predetermined one since the organization follows result based management system."* This unfortunately however is an obstacle to address program's specific goal. "*It should be participatory rather than simply imposing on us."* Ideally, it is best to develop indicators and tools to meet specific needs while involving stakeholders in a participatory process (Kusek & Rist, 2004). However this could be problematic, each project has to select or design indicators which they believe to be specific to their problems and environment (Esther, 2002). In the case of FCD program field staff were required to use pre-designed and pre- selected indicators, which meant that there was frequently little or no consideration of experiences, views, and opinions of field staff within this process. Moreover the beneficiaries did not taken into consideration in designing and selecting tools and methods. The program coordinator said that:

"… as you see we are in the outskirt of Addis Ababa [KolfeKeranyo] the realities work for other programs which are at center of Addis Ababa will not work for us. We are working with community which has the dynamic nature. Thus the Indicators and methods so far have been designed using our perceptions of what participation is and how much of it we require. We have to learn to develop negotiated indicators that allow for the perceptions of beneficiaries to be taken into consideration.

If we assume that the M&E process (including the selection of indicators) exists to fulfill the information demands of a range of actors in the project community, then the need to revise our assumptions and carefully examine what these information needs is very essential(Esther,2002).

Training of Employees

Monitoring and Evaluation for development results ,emphasizes that human resources is vital for an effective monitoring and evaluation ,that staff working should possess the required technical expertise in the area in order to ensure high-quality monitoring and evaluation(UNDP,2009).The MERA section is the department held by only one officer. According to respondents the training regarding the M&E system was usually confined to this section

and the management. The interview and document review revealed that there is training for monitoring and evaluation officer regarding monitoring and evaluation activities and for program location director. But they think this wrong that it had to be given for the coordinators and the field staffs too. One of the informants of the study said:

> training is confined to the top but the one who works the job is the coordinators and field staffs. We are expected to provide a report each month and it is the program coordinator who monitors and evaluates our work immediately before reaching at the top so I think it I very essential to provide training on M&E activities for the coordinators and staffs.

Other training themes were also granted for the respective staff as required. However all of the respondents believed that there is still a gap of knowledge in monitoring and evaluation system of the organization which required extensive training scheme especially in the area of the usage of data base system of the program.

As already mentioned on the previous discussions, although the organization has been using data base system since 2014, there is a gap in using and developing the system. Document review and the interview extracted that there was a limited knowledge in using the data base which frequently the data base is used as source of data only though it was multi tasked to use in other activities like data analysis. This views of respondents was further probed as if whether

Stakeholders Involvement

Program stakeholders involvement including a donors, community, beneficiaries and people involved in the planning and implementation of projects in all stages of monitoring and evaluation throughout the duration of the project is very vital especially for community or social based projects(World Bank,2004).In consultation of stakeholders it will be determined what is to be monitored and evaluated , how M&E is to take place including identification of indicators, and how to analyze data and assess the performance of the project. Interview and focus group discussion with key implementation partners and local community the study find out there is rare case participation of the local community and key

implementation partners during the of the planning phase of the project and selection of tools and indicators. One of the members of the focused group discussion said:

> they came at the beginning of the year and dictate us with the annual plan rather than involving us early with the planning process." On the other hand this process is mentioned by the program coordinator as best practice that he said, though the overall system of the organization has a gap on participatory aspects, since we are working with the community we at least orient them the annual plan of each year.

Government signatories like Addis Ababa women and Children's Affairs Bureau, Addis Ababa City Administration Office, Ministry of Education and different universities are partners with SOS CV. Document review showed usually these government signatories are participated in end term evaluation.

This finding further probed by student researcher whether joint monitoring is held during the ongoing of the program and the interview with program location director ,program coordinator and MERA officer illuminated that though the organization facilitated joint monitoring system and discussion sessions unfortunately due to some inconsistencies it was failed. These government signatories did end-term evaluation. It is based on their approval that SOS CV can proceed with the intervention and even can participate on other projects. However often some misunderstandings raised during the end term evaluations if stakeholders are not consulted to have the opportunity to voice their concern prior to decision is made and not informed or updated about decision already made (UNDP,2006).The program Location Director said:

When M&E is done with external stakeholders there is a problem of going beyond the scope of agreed points. They usually did not give that much concern for the program documents that they simply overview them without much concern and raised issues beyond the scope of our agreement.

FCDP is also working through networking and partnership with seventeen (17) organizations. There was an agreement with them to have a meeting and discussion sessions every quarter. However there was a big problem of keeping this. This view was probed further what would be the cause as a

result respondents said since partnership is based on willingness and commitment it depends on the parties concern. A typical speech from the interview for this is *"...partnership is more of depend on willingness. This is because of negligence and being less concerned for the issue that they failed to keep their words…."*

Management Support

To ensure the success of the M&E system, the management needs to support it. One effective way for management to contribute to the achievement of program objectives is to be directly involved in monitoring and evaluation process –in formulation of critical questions and in collection and analysis of data (UNDP, 1997).The MERA section is a member of management which shows that the management and the MERA department is working so closely. As already discussed in the above sections the management of the organization perceived M&E activities to be one of the most important stages of the program cycle and generally associated it with the notion of strengthening and sustaining institutional development. Thus the concern towards the system has grown readily. Though the MERA department is currently a section run by a single officer there are activities to strengthen the department by employing additional officers. But there is often low concern from the National Office though they allocated budget for the system field visits are very limited which the employees felt low concern is given by the executive heads. At the program level the program coordinator works several activities and coordinate projects which under the FCD program .Above all place of program activities done by different staffs is far from his office that he mentioned he was unable to monitor activities through daily observation. The student researcher observed that his office is isolated from the job activities of other staffs.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter is dealing with the summary of major findings which highlights of the study, conclusion drawn and recommendation made by the student researcher.

The study entitled as" Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation System at Family and Community Development Program: Case of SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa "which makes its scope of time to the years of 2016 and

2017. Thus the study tried to unveil how M&E is done and what are influential factors for the system in SOS Children's Village of Family and Community Development Program that can be taken as illumination of how M&E is done in similar programs and projects. To this end, it made use of a qualitative Descriptive research design. Data for the study purpose is collected using interview, focus group discussion and document review from both primary and secondary sources.

Accordingly, the study required such participants, Program Location Director, MERA Officer, Program Location Finance Manager, Program Coordinator(Program under the study, FCDP), two Community Based Officers, and a focused group discussion with beneficiaries as they called target group of from local Idir and from key implementation partners. Number of participants in the focused group discussion was five three from beneficiaries and two from key implementation partners known as Lewegen Derash Charity association. Thus the study employed purposive sampling technique.

5. Summary of Findings

- Logical framework and result based monitoring and evaluation systems were applicable at Family and Community Development Program of SOS Children's Village.
- Tools, methods and Indicators were initially developed internationally by SOS Children's Village International and contextualized by each nations and finally by program locations of each nation.
- In contextualization process programs sent their proposal of M&E plan for national office and there follows hierarchical steps for final approval.
- FCD program thus developed the M&E plan by its program coordinator and his staffs but usually incorporated pre-designed and pre- selected indicators, which meant that there was frequently little or no consideration of experiences, views, and opinions of field staff within this process since the approval is given by the top it should in the conformance with internationally developed tools and methods.
- In selecting tools and indicators there was little or no consultancy of target groups.

- Reports, review meetings, field visits and mid and end term assessments are ways through which the monitoring and evaluation activities are facilitated through. This is the most participatory aspect of M&E activity of the program in which each staff played his/her role in reporting his/her activity and show his/her work during field visit

- The organization has different M&E tools thus FCD program which is thought by the organization a program with better tools and methods of M&E include data collection, monitoring or field visit tools, self-assessment tool and other indicators are used.

- These tools are developed by the program coordinators and officers on the basis of SOS International developed tools and methods.

- Data is collected on monthly and quarterly basis. Key statistical figures are gathered monthly and grand numerical figure gathered on quarterly basis.

- The collected data is analysed by program coordinator and reported to the MERA officer. The data base system used mainly for data collection purpose. The analysis usually done in simple use of excel spread sheet.

- The M&E findings mostly used for making activities in track and to make decisions on remedial actions. Though little there is learning aspects from M&E results.

- At program level monitoring and evaluation activities were done by program coordinator.

- The M&E system of the program faced different influential factors such as perception towards the concept of M&E system, the nature of the program, tools, indicators and methods, stakeholders' involvement, training level and management support.

- Perception towards the concept of M&E varied in accordance with hierarchical position that the top management view M&E with the notion of strengthening and sustaining institutional development while program coordinators and officers view it as instrument of 'control' and 'judgement' against them.

- The nature of the program influenced the smooth flow of M&E system. Since it is a program working with the community it had to give a due concern to the value, custom and dignity of the community working with.

- Tools, methods and indicators are designed with the assumption of developers that with little or no consultancy of target groups.

- Involvement of stake holders in M&E system is very limited due to incompatibility with schedules since most of stakeholders based on partnership which required commitment.

6.   Conclusions

At SOS CV Addis Ababa there is a separate unit for monitoring and evaluation known as Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Analyzing (MERA) at program location level responsible for monitoring and evaluation works of all program of the location or the organization. However the MERA unit is a department held by only one officer who might led to job load and less effectiveness. Gap is found that, at program level for FCD there is no separate M&E unit in which the monitoring and evaluation activities are done by the program coordinator. The work of M&E system starts with preparing proposal of M&E plan by program coordinator and his staff which follows hierarchical procedures of program location level, national, regional and international level for final approval. The widely used M&E framework especially by NGOs i.e., logical framework used at FCD together with result based system. The log frame contains all major components that all activities done in the program to be checked across this frame. There is a link between individual work plan and M&E system that each worker is responsible to present the report of his/her activity in accordance with individual work plan. Thus this report will be used as a major input for monitoring and evaluation process. Reports, review meetings, self-assessment and field visits are widely used M&E practices both at program and organizational level as an input for M&E system to function effectively. For the past few years since 2014 period in which the MERA section became a separate section, efforts has been towards establishing the foundation and frameworks of the M&E system in the blood stream of the organization.

The MERA section and FCD program though relatively new had variety of tools, methods, manuals and guidelines for M&E system. The most commonly used frameworks were there i.e., logical framework and result based monitoring systems. Tools and methods used are pre-determined by international and national SOS frameworks with minor contextualization. These tools though they make their base from widely used M&E system tools and methods they are developed by International SOS Children's Village which can leave a room to develop a tools that can fit the organizational

culture. Tools and methods used in M&E system mentioned by different authors in literatures were hardly mentioned and used in M&E system of SOS except performance indicator and cost benefit analysis. However most of the tools made their bases to widely known tools and methods in the world. SOS International developed frameworks of tools and methods that can be used at national and program levels after customization process. But the contextualization or customization process has to be in accordance to SOS international frameworks for the approval. Thus the tools include variety of forms used for data collection purpose (the children and family initial and progress assessment), field visit form and different checklists. Each of such forms uses different methods like interview, observation and survey for data collection purpose.

Influential factors of M&E system at FCD of SOS CV Addis Ababa are found to be the nature of the program itself, tools and methods used the management, training level and type, stakeholders' involvement. There is hierarchical perception difference i.e., the top management of the organization consider M&E system as a vital component of the organization giving high consideration through making the officer of the MERA section a member of management. This is good practice that decision makings to be better facilitated by this section. The tools and methods used are also factors affecting M&E system of the program. As mentioned above M&E plan and tools pass through contextualization process which allows preparing a plan which fit with the context under which the program is operating. However since the cascade requires to follow SOS international framework which is one of donor requirement it faced flexibility limit. Hence gaps found in contextualizing them at program level. Thus often to FCD program this came to be incompatible since the assumptions of tool and method developers usually failed to match with reality and situations of the community. Since it is a program that worked closely with families and community efforts are made to the M&E system to respect the value of the community and to make the system participatory. However gap is found that in selection of tools and indicators the monitoring and evaluation process is less participatory. Gap is also found in excelling participation of stakeholders especially with the target groups, partners and government signatories. Therefore to fill this gap it will be better to use and excel participatory monitoring and evaluation system rather than confining to result based monitoring system.

7. Recommendations

The study has found a number of strong points and gaps on the M&E system of Family and Community Development Program of SOS Children's Village of Addis Ababa .Thus student researcher recommends that continuing and strengthening good practices of the project activities in M&E system. Also the student researcher provide the following recommendations that might help to improve the M&E system of the program.

• The MERA section is a department held by a single officer responsible for monitoring and evaluation of all programs (which are eight programs with their multi projects) which might lead to job load and less effectiveness. Hence student researcher recommends to hire more officers in the area.

• Monitoring and evaluation at program level are done by program coordinator who has many other duties and may have limited expertise on the area of M&E. Thus the student researcher recommends assigning M&E experts at program level.

• There is participation level gap in developing tools, methods and indicators. Thus for the project is working with community the use participatory monitoring and evaluation system is advisable rather than result-based monitoring system.

• Provision of training has to be excelled for effective M&E system which currently confined to the MERA officer and management. Since findings show the program staffs are involved in tasks of M&E trainings on monitoring and evaluation has to be given for them.

• It will be better if trainings on data analysis, data quality check using different program data base system are given.

• Findings showed that the perception of program officers towards M&E is low. Thus the management has to make efforts to change this perception through excelling the learning aspect of the concept, communicating and acknowledging best practices of projects find out as a result of monitoring process.
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