

Accountability in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Challenges and Best Practices

A Critical Perspective for University Students

... Why Accountability Matters in M&E?

- Crucial principle that is aimed at:
 - Improved project performance
 - Enhanced resource allocation
 - Trust-building

What is Accountability (in M&E)?

- No single definition, but according to OECD – 3 dimensions:
 - An obligation to demonstrate that work complies with agreed rules and standards.
 - A requirement to report fairly and accurately on performance results according to specified roles, responsibilities and plans.
 - An obligation to show that any work carried out under contract is legally consistent with that contract.



Upwards Accountability



"Yes, the planet got destroyed. But based on the discount rate, that was actually the optimal outcome"

- Compliance with donor regulations, contract and/or other legal requirements, ethical or other standards.
- Financial accountability
 - How money was spent
 - Cost-benefit analysis
- Accountability for short-term outcomes
- Accountability for longer-term outcomes/impact



Downwards Accountability

- A.K.A.: Accountability to Affected People (AAP) = the process of **taking account of**, and **being held accountable by**, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are **affected** by the exercise of such power.
- More challenging than other forms of accountability
 - Power disbalance
 - Lack of or less penalties for non-compliance
 - Stakeholder are too many and too diverse for systematic reporting

Degrees of empowerment



Horizontal & Self Accountability

"You cannot be accountable if you do not learn. And you need to know how well you live up to performance expectations in order to learn. The tug of war between learning and accountability is nonsensical. They need each other." (Irene Guijt, 2010)



- Consideration of context
- Threshold of evidence
- Focus on results and/or process
- Approaches, methodologies & tools
- Cost
- Abuse of M&E

Other Common Challenges

- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities
- Limited resources and capacity
- Political and Institutional barriers
- Data quality and integrity issues
- Weak feedback mechanisms



Maxed out on action, short on reflection

Best practices for promoting accountability in M&E (1)

RACI

A FRAMEWORK FOR CLARIFYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ACCOUNTABLE

Is it stable enough?

INFORMED

How's it coming on?

RESPONSIBLE

Just two more turrets...

CONSULTED

I think it needs more flags



sketchplanations

- **Clear definition of roles and responsibilities**
 - Ensure all stakeholders understand their roles and the importance of their contributions
 - Assign accountability at every level of M&E process
- **Strengthening data collection and verification**
 - Use reliable and consistent methods for data collection
 - Regular audits and independent evaluations to verify data accuracy
- **Participatory M&E and stakeholder engagement**
 - Involve beneficiaries and local communities in M&E processes
 - Ensure beneficiaries/local communities' feedback is integrated into project assessments

Best practices for promoting accountability in M&E (2)

- **Develop robust feedback (response) mechanisms**
 - Create channels for stakeholders to voice concerns and provide input on project progress
 - Implement regular reviews and mid-course corrections based on feedback
- **Building capacity**
 - Provide adequate training and resources to staff involved in M&E
 - Foster a culture of learning and accountability across the project cycle
- **Ensure transparency in reporting**
 - Share findings and outcomes openly with all stakeholders, including donors, communities and government bodies
 - Use accessible formats to present results and allow for easy scrutiny



Ethical Considerations in M&E Accountability

- Informed consent: Ensure that all participants in M&E activities are fully aware of the purpose and use of the data collected
- Confidentiality and data protection: Safeguard sensitive information, particularly for vulnerable populations
- Avoiding conflict of interest: Ensure that evaluators and data collectors are independent and aware of biases.

Thank you!

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