

## Multicultural Education

Research Article

Homepage: [www.MC-caddogap.com](http://www.MC-caddogap.com)**MANAGEMENT SUPPORT AND PROPER GOVERNANCE AS A DETERMINANT FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY PROJECTS.****Dr. Dipela Mmaphuti Percy***Department of Social Work, University of South Africa**Email: dipelp1@unisa.ac.za***ABSTRACT**

Many first-world research projects have highlighted challenges associated with monitoring and evaluations (M&E) for community projects and the lack of technical skills and sustenance by supervisors to support monitoring and evaluation initiatives was among the red-flagged challenges. This prompted the investigation and recording of social workers' views about the support received from supervisors and management to support poverty alleviation projects. Proper monitoring and evaluation systems, supervision, management, and leadership are critical elements for efficient and sustainable poverty alleviation projects. In addition, when projects encounter challenges as many inevitably do; however, those that successfully overcome them tend to have adaptive supervisors and managers who possess the appropriate skill set to address the challenges. This study employed a phenomenological research design with descriptive, exploratory, and contextual research constructs. Purposive sampling was used to select participants and data was collected using a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions in face-to-face interviews. Therefore, this paper reports on the findings from the interviews that were conducted with 12 participants. The participants highlighted possible determinants to bolster and manage community poverty alleviation projects. This paper concludes that management support, supervisor's knowledge of monitoring and evaluation, and increased accountability are essential elements in realising the sustainability of community projects. The implications are that failure to manage M&E initiatives will result in misdirected policy development that is not based on reliable data, which will further worsen the identified challenges.

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Management, Monitoring And Evaluation, Poverty Alleviation, Social Development Social Workers, Supervision

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Supervision is an essential element of the social work practice to prepare and mold competent social workers (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, p.24; O'Donoghue, 2015, p.137; Rankine, 2019, p.23). Kadushin and Harkness 2002, p.23; O'Donoghue and Tsui, 2015; Wong and Lee, 2015 noted that the main objective of the social work supervisor is to ensure that the agency provides quality social work services guided by its procedures and policies. Social work supervisors perform supervisory functions such as administration, education, and support functions as part of their responsibilities. According to Rousmaniere and Renfro-Michel, (2016), the administrative function of supervision implies that the social work supervisor monitors how the social work supervisees do their job to ensure that they provide quality services to their clients which in this case includes supervision of how monitoring and evaluation is conducted (National Association of Social Workers, 2017).

Despite administration and educating social work supervisees, social work supervisors also provide a support function. The support function implies that the social work supervisor should provide the tools that they

need for the supervisees to work effectively (Lietz, 2013; Hair, 2015; IASSW, 2018). Furthermore, social work supervisors provide educational support; hence, they should be knowledgeable to offer monitoring and evaluation training and capacity (O'Donoghue, Wong Yuh Ju, and Tsui, 2018; Beddoe and Davys, 2016).

In the Department of Social Development, Social work supervisors must ensure that Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an important process in safeguarding good governance which includes transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency. Proper and effective application of M&E enables well-coordinated, credible, and relevant projects and these culminate in operational excellence (Kusek & Rist 2004; Haughey, 2014; Geraldi, & Morris, 2011; Westland, 2018). Bromberg and Henderson, (2015) assert that both the M&E on the effectiveness of services and ensuring that the capital given to public service providers is imperative in sustaining project-related growth and sustainability. Improved M&E systems result in improved quality planning and correct implementation of processes in community projects for poverty alleviation (Abbasi & Jaafari, 2018).

Management principles support the precise implementation of M&E techniques within government departments that use M&E findings for planning and budgeting. Besides, M&E systems could be superficial 'tick the checklist' exercises that comply with the monitoring tool (United Nations Development Programme, 2011:14). This implies that information gathered during the monitoring process must be regarded as information that informs relevant decisions taken in building and empowering project members.

Monitoring continuously assesses the progress of programmes or projects in conjunction with the agreed objectives. The correct implementation of M&E provides the assessor with constant feedback on the operation of the project and helps identify potential successes and constraints. Unfortunately, in many projects, monitoring is barely understood and therefore, negatively affects project success (Allen-Ile, Eresia-Eke, and Ile, 2012, p.46). Prennushi, Rubio & Subbarao (2011, p.102) warned that M&E must be conducted by competent personnel and organizations that can utilise the findings to influence policies. These scholars further indicate that one of M&E challenges is that it is conducted by personnel who lack capacity and have no strong links to the key decision-making processes. This results in a loss of opportunity to learn what works and what does not, oftentimes coupled with a loss of funds.

The World Health Organization (2011, p.31) and Allen-Ile et al. (2011, p.80) assert that monitoring is successful when supervisors and managers focus their attention on planning and developing a set of actions that inform the M&E activities and the results that emerge from them. Monitoring community projects should not be an afterthought or a hurried activity. Therefore, planning for M&E illuminates the resource requirements, such as human capital, material, financial, and other resources. In most projects, M&E is ineffective due to a lack of M&E timeous preparations. Sometimes this stems from the fact that M&E is not integrated into programme/project planning phases; for example, in most organizations, there are no provisions for dedicated personnel, finance, and materials for continuous M&E.

The management and authorities need to manage information generated from M&E with the view of analyzing it and subsequently using it to assist community projects. M&E activities generate information that helps managers to determine performance. If this information is not utilized to assist and empower the personnel and cover the gaps within the projects then it is futile (Presidency, 2007, p.12).

## 2. BACKGROUND

Limpopo Department of Social Development in Waterberg district has initiated several projects such as sewing, bakery, poultry farming, brickyards, and stone crushing to address poverty. These projects strive to promote sustainable development. In light of such strides, the researcher is convinced that M&E plays an important role in sustaining such poverty-alleviating projects. The Department of Social Development spends millions of Rands and human resources through official delegations to monitor community projects every quarter, but most projects continue to suffer and collapse and do not address the initial poverty alleviating and enhancing community livelihoods goals. One of the government challenges is that monitoring, and evaluation is not well coordinated or planned, or it does not adequately inform planning, policymaking, and budgeting. This results in government interventions missing the opportunity to improve project efficiency (Presidency, 2011, p.16). In the article titled "Time to take performance monitoring seriously", Keeton (2012, p.47) contends that performance monitoring constitutes an important element that provides an "early warning system of things going wrong within the project."

Public institutions play an important role in society because they are more socially driven and are the enforcers of government policies (Rainey, 2009, p.17). In most developing countries, government planning is

not highly efficient; policies, projects, or programmes do not always identify the desired outcomes, and often poor planning has an impact on how outcomes are measured and evaluated (Hall, 2015). Hall (2015) further highlighted that monitoring planning should also be coupled with skilled managers and monitors who have the necessary knowledge and understanding that monitoring is the continuous assessment of programmes or projects considering the stipulated implementation schedule and utilised for its purpose as a good management tool to provide continuous feedback on the project implementation and help identify potential successes and constraints to facilitate timely decisions. Unfortunately, in many projects, the role of this is barely understood and therefore negatively impacts the projects. According to (Rainey, 2009) effective M&E requires adaptive managers and leaders – meaning that implementation of M&E processes does not only involve enacting plans but also modifying them in response to changes in circumstances or understanding. Lack of political will, inadequate leadership, management weaknesses, inappropriate institutional design, misaligned decision rights, and a lack of an effective M&E culture affect South Africa's ability to achieve successful policy objectives (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2017).

Given the old evaluation tradition within international development focusing on compliance and upwards accountability, the types of monitoring and evaluation expertise previously prioritised, and the current structures and incentives in place for individuals and organisations, it can be practically difficult to engage in the sorts of open learning from success and failure that adaptive management requires. To support adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation need to be clear about its intended functions and how they might need to be met in different ways. Monitoring and evaluation need to be iteratively connected to planning and implementation, rather than a linear series of discrete activities undertaken by different people. In an organization, this implies that monitoring and evaluation must be regarded as a central implementation and management function, rather than something done by a sub-set of staff, which might be separated from core functions.

### 3. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

The study employed a qualitative research methodology, using exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design to realise the intended research goals (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher opted for this approach because it aligns with the research goal, design, and question. These designs helped the researcher develop an in-depth understanding of how monitoring and evaluation processes are conducted within the DSD. The population for this study constituted social workers employed by the Department of Social Development for more than three years with experience in monitoring and evaluating projects because they provide empirical and relevant information. The study was conducted in the five municipalities of Waterberg District, Limpopo Province. The ethical clearance was obtained from the UNISA Department of Social Work Ethics Review Committee (Ref#: R&EC:01/02/18/42178711-19).

To draw a sample from the larger population, non-probability, purposive sampling techniques were employed. Prospective participants were considered based on their experiences appropriate to the researcher's area of interest (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Generally, small samples are used in qualitative studies (Schmidt & Brown, 2015). The researcher was not interested in the representation of the population but in a sample that would provide appropriate responses (Nicholls, 2009; Creswell, 2016). According to Rossman & Rallis, (2012:50) in qualitative research sampling is "an exercise in exploring diversity, difference and variation". The sample was relatively small, with 12 participants drawn from the population.

The researchers ensured that the purposive sample size was not determined at the onset of the study according to qualitative research requirements (Schmidt & Brown, 2015). The data collection process was guided by data saturation. Data saturation refers to a point when the data new insights no longer emerge to bring additional insights into the research question (Mack, 2005), and repetition of information becomes evident (Schmidt & Brown, 2015). Data analysis in a qualitative study refers to the process of organising and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, initiate critiques, or generate theories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Therefore, the study followed the eight steps of qualitative data analysis proposed by Tesch (cited by Creswell, 2009, p.186), these steps helped the researcher to organize and transcribe interviews, read through the data thoroughly, and apply the coding process. The coding process helped develop themes which led to data interpretation and analysis then compilation of the report.

## 4. PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 1 presents the biographical profiles of the participants. To ensure anonymity, numbers were assigned to participants, as indicated.

**Table 1:** Profile of participants

Participant	Occupation	Gender	Years of M&E experience
1	Social worker	Male	17
2	Social worker	Female	14
3	Social worker	Female	11
4	Social worker	Male	4
5	Social worker	Female	7
6	Social worker	Male	5
7	Social worker	Female	10
8	Social worker	Female	8
9	Social worker	Male	8
10	Social worker	Male	5
11	Social worker	Female	4
12	Social worker	Male	5

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The participants were asked about their experiences relating to supervisors' and managers' support when they monitor and support poverty alleviation projects. The participants revealed that the executive authority and the accounting officer are bound by statutory requirements to establish the M&E system and report performance to various oversight institutions (National Treasury, 2014). However, it was noted in the Department of Social Development, that there appears to be a lack of understanding from the supervisors and a lack of structure as far as supporting poverty alleviation projects through monitoring is concerned. The following themes and subthemes emerged from the findings of the study.

### **Leadership, governance, and management**

Most participants identified leadership, governance, and management as critical drivers of results-based M&E systems. Furthermore, it is essential to have people who have buy-in and understand the system and support it; is important that the executive management and head of the department support the system and use it to improve performance.

Participants noted that there is insufficient M&E championing at executive and senior management levels, which is an essential element in the implementation of M&E systems. Participants also emphasised the ideal situation rather than the status of the involvement of M&E supervisors and managers. the,

### ***Sub-theme 1: Leadership***

Most participants highlighted poor leadership and governance as one of the challenges contributing to the collapse of M&E in the department. Participants supported the notion -mentioned above arguing that: "The NGO coordinator at the district level should drive the process because maybe if it is driven from the top, people will be able to understand what is it that they need to be doing within the department".

In practice, the participants were adamant that it is the primary responsibility of the supervisor to support the initiatives of monitoring and evaluation. However, some participants believed that managers lack the authority and skills required "You need to get the person at the level of executive management, at general manager level, who can sit at the executive management level and drive the whole process of M&E, to influence decision making in the department. Furthermore, leadership must be based on people who know, people who have experience, people who have the interest, and people who are disciplined".

The participants emphasised the need for managers' involvement in the implementation of the M&E framework. As accounting officers, they have the ultimate responsibility and accountability. Participants believed that leadership's limited involvement is associated with a lack of understanding of the M&E leadership

role. in the Department. Thus, lack of authority, and prioritisation of M&E. Some participants do not understand the M&E role of the leadership positions in the department”, However, some participants emphasised M&E prioritisation at the executive level and noted that “there is nobody at the management level who is giving M&E chance”. (Akande, 2014, p.14) also posited that efficient M&E management involves a management approach that is explicitly prepared to be adaptive in situations of ongoing uncertainty, where there is no sufficient knowledge to inform all decisions, and where initial planning will need to be reviewed and either elaborated or revised in response to new information or changes in circumstances; however, it is lacking in this study.

### *Sub-theme 2: Lack of understanding of the M&E process*

Managers’ support is a critical component not only in the implementation of monitoring and evaluation but for all initiatives that reinforce the achievement of the public institution's goals. Management support is even more critical in the transformation of public sectors where new initiatives are implemented in the face of excessive resistance and uncertainty. In essence, providing support is the single most important function of every manager to ensure that social service professionals implement monitoring and evaluation for community projects professionally. Unfortunately, the participants reported that managers do not sufficiently support the monitoring and evaluation function. Participants noted that managers and supervisors find it difficult to support because they do not understand the monitoring and evaluation process. Most supervisors are also overwhelmed with caseloads; hence, they are unable to offer support, because M&E is not regarded as a critical function within the DSD.

#### *Participants corroborated that:*

“There is so much in their table first of all there is so much on their table and there is this tradition that we have inherited where in which the structure within the department has been broken down , there are no clear roles of what manager should be doing... and should be the senior social worker be doing and all those things so actually I think that the supervisor should not even be overseeing the M&E there should be a senior social worker that is appointed into M&E team that will be guiding, overseeing and supporting other social worker that have been tasked to monitor and evaluate, remember supervisors have a lot of duties they need to supervise every social worker in terms of case work, they need to supervise in terms of administrative , the need to do operational duties and attend lot of meetings within the department , province and the municipal level so they are really not doing very much well in this one because they have lot of things to do”. “There is so much in their table first of all there is so much on their table and there is this tradition that we have inherited where in which the structure within the department has been broken down, there are no clear roles of what manager should be doing... they are really not doing very much well in this one because they have lot of things to do”.

According to the social work supervision framework for South Africa (2012:06), one of the key Recruitment and Retention Strategy objectives is addressing the concerns and conditions of services that have a negative impact on service provision. The strategy identified supervision as one of the critical areas that need attention if the retention of professionals is to be realised. The Strategy further highlighted a decline in the productivity and quality of services rendered due to lack of supervision. This is because of high caseloads, emotional and other trauma experienced by workers in service delivery; high stress levels due to personal, professional, and societal demands, and lack of resources required to deliver their mandate.

It is evident from the above assertions that participants concede that there are many responsibilities expected from their supervisors and as a result, the role of supporting them in terms of monitoring evaluation struggles. The same excerpts also highlight that there are no clear roles between the supervisors and senior social workers, calling for the effective and efficient support of social service professionals, delegation and role clarification should be made at times supervisors are overwhelmed with other activities and the responsibilities of supervision. Similarly, the Participant below showed that sometimes support is offered by the supervisors, but it is not sufficient.

“Ok. Yes, I get support from my supervisor. Immediately after coming from monitoring a project, I bring the report to the supervisor. We sit down and we discuss. However, sometimes it may not be like that because of their workload. They are much loaded, they sometimes go to the district, and then we just give them the feedback from the centre”.

A follow-up question was posed to the other Participant where the researcher wanted to further understand why supervisors were not offering support to the supervisees. The response indicated that supervisors appear not to understand the monitoring and evaluation concept and their roles. They also noted that one of the reasons may be that supervisors are not involved in the development of monitoring and evaluation systems within the



department, though they are expected to supervise the implementation of the process. These sentiments were emphasised by participants as follows:

“I think our supervisors also need to have this knowledge because at some time you find that they are as confused as we are in terms of what to do when the organization is facing challenges so sometimes, they are less helpful to us they also need to be capacitated on this thing”.

Management support to the practitioners covers the whole range of issues from identification of shortfalls, initial management training, support through extension services, and functional support to strengthen relationships with external stakeholders and the development of policies and monitoring tools (Akande, 2014, p.7).

When the same question on the role and support of the supervisors in monitoring and evaluation of community projects was posed again, one of the Participants further reported:

“I can say is non-existent to me because at times you go to the organization, you need to be guided the supervisor is not there at times you go you need to be coached on certain aspects sometimes you lack some things, our supervisors are administrators are meeting attendees are everything which you can mention if anyone is doing. So, they don't play a supportive and critical role in M&E and maybe that is one of the factors that contributed to the collapse as you can say because there is no willingness, the management, and the leadership to ensure that these projects are maintained so yes”.

This excerpt communicates that supervisors have neglected their supervision and supportive roles towards their supervisees; it appears that they are comfortable with their level of knowledge and expertise as opposed to further empowering themselves in monitoring and evaluation. Smith, (2014, p.13) emphasised that most owner-managers have no formal training in the management of skills, especially, monitoring and evaluation of financial management and people management. Lack of knowledge by supervisors and managers on financial management combined with the uncertainties of the business environment, often leads poverty alleviating community projects to serious sustainability problems. Community project development could fail because of inefficient management. Participants described their experience with supervision as follows:

“I will say, I will not be but let me be very frank, they are not knowledgeable on monitoring and evaluation, and they are not knowledgeable on any other issues but specifically on M&E they are not, but I will not expect them to be knowledgeable on M&E if they are not knowledgeable on standardized issues which we deal with on daily basis”.

This supports the assertion that when there is no cooperation based on trust, support, supervision, and transfer of skills, especially on monitoring and evaluation, the supervisee and clientele population suffer as a result. As mentioned earlier and reaffirming the importance of M & E tools as the backbone of this study, there is a need for management's commitment to accessing and proper use of each tool to produce the expected results (Fitzgerald, 2009, p.48).

The M&E system design should start at the same time as the overall project preparation and design subject to the same economic and financial appraisal, at least to achieve the least-cost means of securing the desired objectives. Such practice has been adopted for many projects in recent years. Problems identified in earlier M&E systems that were set after the project's inception. Often M&E was a management role although they had too much to grapple with and could not provide sufficient time, resources, or commitment (Nabris, 2011, p.76).

Participants highlighted that lack of M&E supervision and support from the supervisors resulted in monitoring for compliance because even when they encounter challenges that require interventions, supervisors are not available.

“M&E about supervisors is only based on compliance eh. There is thorough overseeing or supervision eh of monitoring reports they only append signatures and forward so there is not much support from supervisors to officials regarding eh monitoring even during intervention levels there is not much intervention, so the support is very low”.

The Presidency RSA (2007) emphasises the significance of an M&E culture. “Besides the formal elements of an M&E system, equally important is the informal culture of the organization”. Is the managerial culture defensive, blaming, and dismissive of monitoring and reported findings? Or are M&E findings regarded as an opportunity to openly explore problems and engage in critical but constructive introspection? Much of these depend on the tone set by the political heads and institution senior officials. Without a management culture, that demands performance, M&E systems could degenerate into superficial “tick the checklist” exercises. Participants further noted that there is a non-compliance culture that has developed within the DSD and some of

the supervisors are aware, while some are unaware because they do not give themselves time to go through monitoring reports when the officials return from the field. This view was expressed by one of the Participants as follows:

“I think one of the issues is the mindset that M&E is of certain individuals and theirs is just to oversee they are not supposed to go to the level of officials and assist where is necessary that’s the other part and the ... The other issue is the supervision framework which most of the supervisors are overwhelmed with the work and then again, the department on its own did not train supervisors on the supervision framework as it is they have manipulated the document and they have secured the information, yes so, I don’t believe that they also understand their roles in specific to projects of monitoring and evaluation”.

The excerpt highlights that at DSD monitoring is done for compliance and to reach targets rather than as a significant process aimed at bringing stability, empowerment, and sustainability within projects. As a result, the validity of the monitoring and evaluation process is compromised. Management participation in M & E implementation could produce effective communication for various objectives. These include facilitating ‘early wins’ communication to increase support and enlist engagement with those who are not yet engaged, ensure early access to products and services of initiatives for intended beneficiaries, mobilise additional resources to fill resource gaps and ensure effective use of lessons learned in future decision-making (Chaplowe, 2008, p.18). Management participation throughout the programming cycle ensures ownership, learning, and sustainability of results. M & E is essential to all projects, big or small since the results enable better decision-making by helping to identify target project areas and those that need to be adjusted or replaced. Although different types of projects require different types of M&E systems, the information and data collection at all levels of the project life cycle adds value to every stage of the project by ensuring project targets are met.

This emphasises the importance of supervision and support from the supervisors towards effective implementation of the monitoring process and ensuring that poverty-alleviating community projects are sustainable. To ensure effective monitoring and evaluation, the supervisors must play the educator, supervisor, and administrator roles. In the supportive function, the primary focus is on worker morale and job satisfaction. The goal is to improve morale, job satisfaction, and the quality of work (Kadushin & Kadushin, 2017, p.52; Engelbrecht, 2010, p.33). An enabling environment is created to enhance productivity; this is specifically regarded as a resource to help the supervisor and supervisee deal with job-related tensions and stressors that may, if unattended, impair the work to the detriment of service delivery. The second function is educational; the primary goal is to assist the supervisees in enhancing their knowledge, attitude, and skills so that they can perform at their optimal level when executing their monitoring and evaluation duties. Supervisees must be empowered to intervene in various situations on different levels within the projects. This function should be distinguished from staff development programmes and in-service training. It maintains an individualised focus in that it is directed at the educational needs of the supervisee within the context of a prescribed workload. The content of educational supervision shifts, depending on qualifications, competencies, and experience of each worker.

Supportive supervision is a promising approach to improve routine data collection for M&E of community-based programmes. It can increase staff capacity to collect, manage, and use data and improve leadership capacity to make informed decisions based on collected data. Enhancing a programme’s capacity to synthesise and disseminate information, also contributes to the larger goal of strengthening health systems.

Marshall and Fehringer, (2013, p.03), emphasise highlighted the significance of a supervisor from interviews to direct observations, which suggest that the supportive supervision project will successfully improve data quality and collection at community-level, achieving a consistent use of tools to facilitate the supervision and provide feedback on staff performance. Participants attributed these successes to standardised data collection tools, ongoing supervision, and training. Emphasis on data use strategies, collaboration, and mentoring during supportive supervision visits emerged as aspects that needed improvement.

### ***Sub-theme 3: Knowledge and Capacity***

Most of the tools within the M&E frameworks were not easily understood by the data collectors. The qualifications of most of the practitioners were not necessarily sufficient to comprehend the tools. Most of the practitioners have low M&E qualifications, and project members did not understand what is expected of them, as explained by one of the Participants:

“These are local people from those communities whom we select from the community based on poverty and unemployment and at the same time the literacy levels are low so we can’t expect them to complete or understand our long monitoring tools”.

In this case, capacity entails organisational, operational, and human capacity. It involves staff strength and skills and expertise needed for effective function on the job (Gorgens and Kusek 2009, p.92).

Participants also identified capacity limitations, in some specific tools within the M&E framework:

At this stage, capacity not only refers to numerical strength but also lack of skilled personnel handling data collection. This is the case of limited human capacity, according to Gorgen and Kusek (2009, p.92). The people who were meant to collect the data did not have the requisite skills to perform the M&E roles, because they did not understand the tools. The M&E system may be unable to function efficiently if there is a shortage of an adequate skill set.

The issue of capacity was not a problem peculiar to DSD but also a universal challenge. South Africa also has a skills deficit, so it is hard to get people to record information and write reports methodically and, there might be resistance to it (Marshall and Fehringer, 2013).

*Participants summarised the lack of capacity for the implementation of M&E frameworks:*

“My impression from when I joined the organisation is that there is a nice framework and there are nice things that you can gather from that and the changes that can happen in people’s lives. However, at the same time, DSD doesn’t have the capacity to implement that and to implement that regularly so that you can do it for a long period, and you can have enough data to feed the system and to do the analysis.”

The Participant opines that to fully implement the M&E framework, there is a need for dedicated M&E staff:

“I think that to implement it you would need an M&E department and some field staff who just do M&E, which we don’t have. So, I would say lack of capacity and I would say that the requirements that the organisation has in terms of reporting to stakeholders and the public; are nice things to have but at the same time we do need perhaps a particular project to do that”.

Furthermore, Manthosi (2016); Godden (2012), and Engelbrecht (2013) argue that one of the problems that hinders quality supervision in social work is that only a few social work supervisors have undergone supervision training within the DSD. Hence, they lack current theoretical knowledge which could assist them in providing quality supervision. Although DSD has spent resources in designing what was described as ‘otherwise useful’ M&E frameworks, they do not have personnel with the necessary skills to undertake the implementation. However, the study conducted by Maluleka (2022) further highlighted that supervision challenges go beyond knowledge and skills and are mostly fuelled by fatigue, lack of resources, high caseloads, and unrealistic expectations.

#### ***Sub-theme 4: Administrative competency***

Administration helps organisations run efficiently and in an organised way. Participants highlighted that for efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation, supervisors should have administrative skills such as the ability to analyse data, report writing, observation, and communication skills. These skills could assist the social service professionals to correctly interpret the data collected from monitoring and as a result, advise management and project members on how to improve project functioning. Management and authorities need to manage information generated from M&E with the view to analysing it and subsequently assisting the community projects. M&E activities generate information that helps managers determine project performance. If this information is not utilised to assist and empower the personnel and correct the gaps within the projects, then it is not adequately used (Presidency, 2007). One of the participants noted that as much as they need to have administrative skills, they are of the view that the Department of Social Development did not adequately empower them and the supervisors to conduct effective monitoring and evaluation. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002), the supervisor’s administrative function implies that the s/he monitors how social work supervisees do their job to ensure that they provide quality services to their clients. In the administrative function of supervision, social work supervisors are responsible for writing performance assessments of social work supervisees, monitoring adherence to the organization’s procedures and policies, assigning monthly activities to social work supervisees, writing work improvement plans, and signing reports (Lietz, 2013). The administrative function also implies outlining what social work supervisors expect from supervisees and vice versa and tracking work performance. Social work supervisors also provide training to educate and capacitate social work supervisees with skills required to effectively provide quality services to clients and the provision of training is referred to as educational supervision (Lietz, 2013). When asked about the administrative skills that are required for effective monitoring and if they are empowered, one of the Participants reported:



No, I don't think so because firstly since I have been employed by the Department and given the task of monitoring these projects, I have never been in any way taken to training about monitoring and evaluation of these projects, and this training that I am talking about I am talking about report writing and data analysis skill. We have never been taken to those workshops or training. And even our supervisors appear to be lacking knowledge and skills in this field.

Boerma and AbouZahr (2014), Latib, (2014), Lahey (2015), and Taylor & Cheung (2010) emphasize that monitoring officers and supervisors should be empowered and guided by adequate data collection, analytical and statistical skills when they conduct monitoring processes. The respondents reported that they were not thoroughly trained and capacitated administratively to support the projects. Administrative competency remains one of the critical skills that social welfare practitioners must have to effectively support the programmes. The above response implies that M&E does not only relate to data collection but to the full range of activities involved in monitoring and evaluation, managing the monitoring and evaluation function; identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders; developing coherent and plausible situation analyses and theories of change; identifying and prioritizing monitoring and evaluation needs; gathering and analysing data; and reporting findings and supporting the use of these findings.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

What makes monitoring poverty alleviation projects effective?

### **Systematic monitoring and evaluation**

Supervisors must heed the need to monitor M&E programmes more systematically to ensure effective implementation. Routine monitoring and data collection is a necessity in poverty alleviation projects and programmes because they are funded by the government revenue budget. Systematic and routine monitoring is essential to assess the intervention quality, processes, and measure the performance of inputs, outputs, and outcomes. In the absence of a strong monitoring system, there will be challenges noted in this study.

### **Effective allocation of resources to support the monitoring and evaluation process.**

To confirm the sustainability of poverty alleviation projects, supervisors and managers need to ensure that there is fair and effective utilization and allocation of resources for effective 'monitoring' of the huge investments made.

### **Stakeholder collaboration and community participation**

Poverty alleviation projects may be effective when supervisors and managers embrace and support the participation of locals and relevant stakeholders. Practitioners and managers need to share information with beneficiaries to facilitate collective or individual action. When beneficiaries are not only informed but consulted on key issues at some or all stages of a project cycle, the level of community participation rises. There is an opportunity for beneficiaries to interact and provide feedback to the project agency which the latter could consider in the design and implementation stages. This should be done by specific methods and processes to identify, analyses, and represent stakeholders, including mapping them over time. These include collaboration mapping and social network analysis. Monitoring and evaluation also need to be done in ways that are accessible to diverse stakeholders, which support collaboration, build, maintain, and rebuild trust including finding ways to recognize and learn from failures and address power issues. This might involve methods and processes such as active listening, collaboration, learning, and action plans, co-location, informal opportunities for sharing, structured communicative techniques, and ways of working approach.

### **Collaboration networks**

The Department needs to improve its relationship with other professionals and private sector institutions that share the same monitoring and evaluation interest. Lack of teamwork and multidisciplinary cooperation among professionals and the lack of support from relevant sister departments negatively impact M&E. Some projects such as sewing struggle to find sustainable markets for their goods. Participants contended that professionals could assist with market research and sourcing.

### **Governance and management support**

Generally, the participants indicated that there is a lack of collaboration among departmental structures, which provided little support to existing projects. Adequate support is required to ensure the success of income-generating projects, since most of the project members are in dire need of assistance in accessing funds, capacity

building, and project management, to increase the project's chance of success. However, the absence of M&E units at both district and provincial levels contributed to poor M&E systems. It is recommended that adequate financial support be made available to cater to the trade tools and ensure their sustainability through effective personnel training. Management must show commitment towards implementing strong and sustainable Monitoring and Evaluation systems to effectively monitor their projects. This would eventually lead to the allocation of appropriate budgets to cater to the mapping of an effective project implementation strategy. Qualified monitoring and evaluation personnel must be hired to support poverty-alleviating community projects.

### 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Managers play a significant role in the implementation of M&E policies and guidelines. Accountability and support are the most critical components of supervisors' key performance areas. Their inability to take responsibility, provide support, and prioritise monitoring and evaluation renders the implementation process ineffective. Besides the impact of supervisors' lack of understanding, it may point to a lack of accountability, and failure to prioritise and implement the recommendations suggested against impediments to effective implementation. Since the roles and responsibilities of supervisors in the implementation of monitoring and evaluation are provided for in the legislation, the employer needs to find mechanisms or measures through which supervisors are held accountable to support monitoring and evaluation initiatives. The observable limitation of the study is that it only collected data from social workers; hence, managers and supervisors themselves. Further research may be conducted with the supervisors and managers who are not included to fully establish their roles and challenges in supporting M&E activities and initiatives conducted by social workers and implementors.

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