

Improving Monitoring and Evaluation System for Community Development Project: SSECALINA Project Case

Diamondra Helinoro Razaivaovololoniaina, Pierre Andrianarisoa Ratsimbazafy,
Elisé Raveloson, Olivier Herindrainy Rakotomalala, Jules Bosco Bezaka
University of Antananarivo, Madagascar

Abstract--The SSECALINA project encounters problems during the implementation of various activities throughout their respective phases of execution. Gaps are stated between the actual and the desired situation. This is commonly observed during project monitoring and evaluation execution. To increase the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation system, a comprehensive analysis framework will be used in the light of which solutions would be proposed. To remedy the defective state, two factors will be studied in this thesis including human or social factor and technical factor. The model proposed will help monitoring and evaluation staffs in development programs to better invest in improving their work for the performance of the program.

I. INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and evaluation tools are developed within development projects but no standard induces or requires them to do so, as it has been the case for the community development project such as SSECALINA since its starting in 1994. By contrast, the procedure in development projects requires the establishment of monitoring and evaluation system, which is rather an obligation to set up indicators. The development of the monitoring and evaluation system for development projects is specified in the management principle of development projects, i.e. in the whole set of documents that turn around its creation. In addition, the

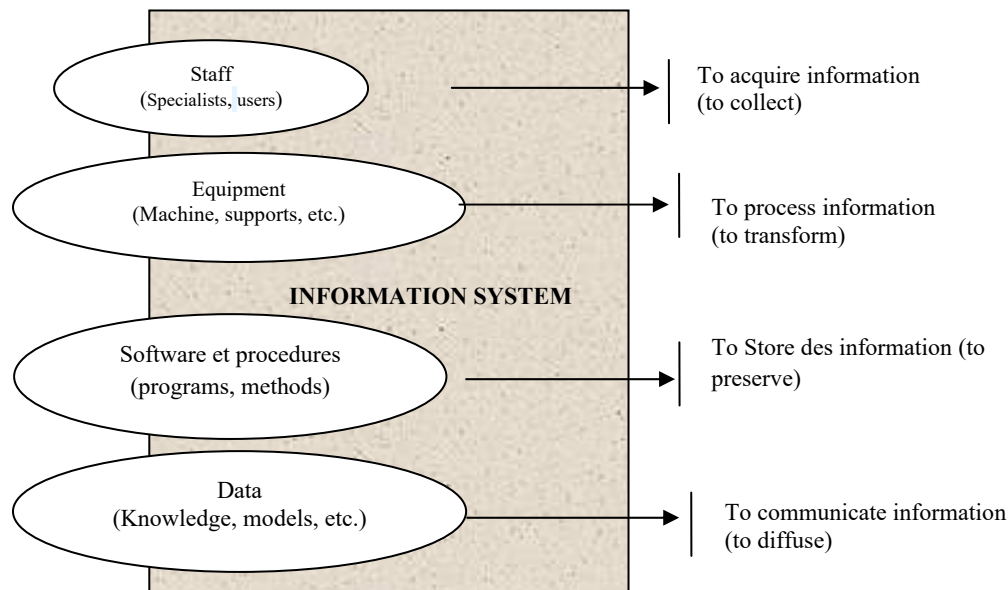
establishment of the monitoring and evaluation system within development projects is key factors for the success and the sustainability of the interventions. The question then arises on the possible extent of this phenomenon and on the way in which the practice of monitoring and evaluation diffuses within the development project. Such a study imposes, in advance, to clarify what means monitoring and evaluation and measurement of the performance. Indeed, literatures related to the monitoring and evaluation define it as a tool to measure the success criteria of the project. The following analyzes are based, in part, on the work which is carried out on the purpose of a doctoral thesis.

A. Information system

The information system is an organized set of resources: Equipment, software, staff, data, procedures... allowing to acquire, process, store data (in the forms of data, texts, images, sounds, etc) in and between organizations. [1]

The dimensions of information system are.

- Informational: the information system produces representations, handles and produces information
- Technological: the information system is built containing tools, and uses information technologies
- Organisational: the information system is an element of the processes and a structure of the organization



B. Success criteria of development projects

According to Salimatou Diallo and Denis Thuillier [2], the success criteria of projects are identified as follow:

- The satisfaction of the recipients of generated goods and services (BENSATIS)
- The conformity of produced goods and services to what had been planned in the project plan (BSCONF)
- The achievement of the objectives originally identified (OBJECTIVES)
- The respect of deadlines in the course of the project (DELAYS)
- The respect of the budget in the course of the project (BUDGET)
- The great visibility acquired by the project (VISIBI)
- The good reputation of the Project with reference to the main funds donor (REPUTATION)
- The chances of the project to generate additional funding (FINAD)
- The sustainable impacts of the project on the beneficiaries (IMPACT)
- Acquirement of a sustainable and countrywide institutional capacity by the project (CAPADUR)

C. The SSECALINA Project monitoring and evaluation information system

In its work in the field of systemic, Janusz Bucky and Yvon Pesqueux [3] have helped to identify the model constituting the basis of the majority of the current approaches of the information system whose main purpose, in this context, is to provide each actor of the organization all information on its current or past situation. This model distinguishes, three sub-systems in one organization,:

- The operating system constituted by overall resources related to the company activity;
- The pilotage system incorporating all components in charge of the management and the direction of the organization and its assets;
- The information system seen as a tool for communication between the operating system and the pilotage system.

The analysis of the monitoring and evaluation application will lead us, in a first time, to highlight the importance of the

monitoring and evaluation system in the sphere of development projects such as SSECALINA as well as its issues. Subsequently, we will present a solution path to improve this information system. The following analyzes are based, in part, on the work carried out in the context of a doctoral thesis.

The SSECALINA project encounters problems in the exercise of monitoring evaluation which hinders then to its effectiveness (unmet target).

Primarily, on the technical side: the monitoring and evaluation system failure inherent in the collection, the storage, the analysis, the exploitation and the dissemination of information.

Secondly on the human side: through a lack of competence of actors in the field of monitoring and evaluation as well as in the field of results principles.

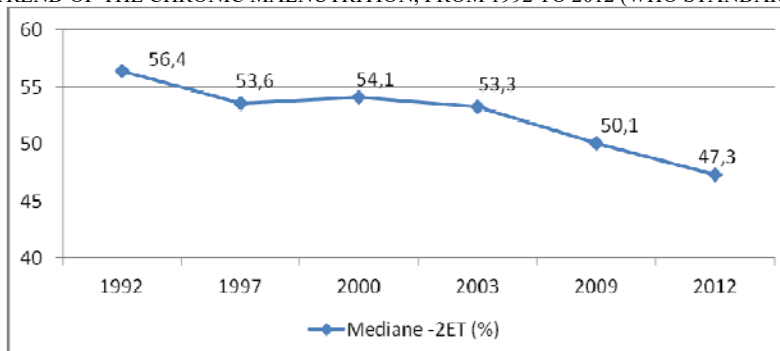
So the investigation is oriented on the technical and human factors of the project. In this context, development project such as the SSECALINA Project is brought to set up a process of continuous improvement of its performance measurement and pilotage, to provide information on the success criteria of the projects cited above.

D. Study framework

The SSECALINA project standing for “Surveillance, Sante et Education des Communautés en ALimentation et Nutrition Améliorée” which means “monitoring, health and education of the communities in feeding and improved nutrition” is a project funded by the World Bank since 1992. Its mission is to contribute to the reduction of chronic malnutrition among children less than 5 years. It is a multisectoral response that aims to reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition among these children under 5 years as to reduce by at least 10 points the rate of chronic malnutrition from 50,1% to 42.8% and also to increase exclusive breastfeeding rate from 65 % to more than 98% and maintain such result for up to 2 years or beyond.

Results during the course of its 20 years of existence demonstrate that the impacts of interventions in Madagascar, on the nutritional status of children are not significant during the period from 1992 to 2012. [4]

TREND OF THE CHRONIC MALNUTRITION, FROM 1992 TO 2012 (WHO STANDARD)



SOURCE: INSTAT/ENSOMD 2012-2013

II. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A. Systemic approach

In the synthesis of the Group AFSCET work "Dissemination of the systemic thinking"[5]: in a system or sub-system subject to a transformation, input variables and output variables should be distinguished. Input or entries are under the influence of the system environment and the outputs results from its internal activity. The retro-action circle (feed-back) is any mechanism allowing to resend back to the system entry, any information in the form of data and directly dependent on the output, so is the mission of the monitoring and evaluation system.

The feedback circles can take two forms:

- The positive (or explosive) circles, on which are based the dynamic of change. The re-injection of the output results on the entry contributes to facilitate and to amplify the transformation already underway. The effects are cumulative ("snowball" effect) and lead to a divergent behaviour which takes the form of either indefinite expansion or explosion, or a total blocking of the activity.
- The negative (or stabilizer) circles, on which are based the balance and the stability. The feedback is in the opposite direction of the gap to the balance of the output variable (which assumes to have fixed in advance the desired level for this balance, what is called, in theory, the set point value regulation). If the feedback is efficient, there is a stabilization of the system that shows itself as being finalized, i.e. inclined toward the realization of a goal.

The results obtained during the 20 years of existence of the project express the need of enquiring on the monitoring and evaluation system as it is used as a tool of the feedback circle.

B. The approach

Before embarking on the improvement process of the monitoring and evaluation system, research could be carried out in two major steps:

- **Observation of the system by various observers through various aspects;** it is an analysis of the interactions and the regulation chains. In order to document the current processes, semi-directed interview has been performed with a definite number of actors. The choice of the persons interviewed was fixed on the 9 intervention areas of the project. Finally, 56 people were interviewed with 9 in charge of program for each region, 45 monitoring employees per program and 1 in charge of monitoring and evaluation at the central level.
- **modelling taking into account the lessons learned from the evolution of the system;** this is a simulation and confrontation with the reality (experimentation) to obtain a consensus

C. Tools

The basic tools often used in the systemic approach are:

- The systemic triangulation; it is to make the analysis of the system under three aspects which are functional aspect, structural aspect and historical aspect
- The systemic cutting, this is an analysis on the basis of four criteria: the purpose criterion, the historical criterion, the structural criterion and the organizational level criterion

III. RESULTS

A. Result from the analysis of the existing

The functional aspect: it is mostly linked to the purpose or purposes of the system. The purposes of the monitoring and evaluation system are defined by the answer to the question: why does this project need this system and at what point should it be useful? A review of the logical framework of the project helps to know the project expectations. This synthesis document reflects the needs of the project in terms of information, so is the purpose and the range of this system. In its environment the monitoring and evaluation system should meet the needs of the stakeholders in terms of information. One seeks spontaneously to answer the questions: What does this system in its environment? What is it for? In its environment, this system should respond to the information needs of the parties involved in the project: the project staff, National Board of the project, World Bank, Government, communities (recipients), implementation partners (Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Water and sanitation, Ministry of Agriculture...), local partners (technical services), local authorities.

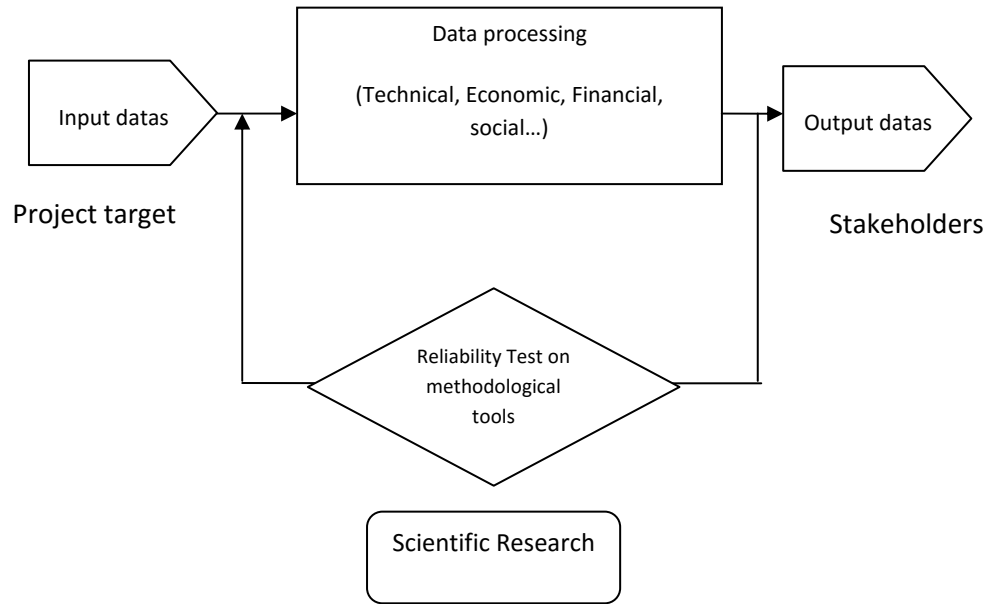
The structural aspect: the purpose is to describe the structure of the system and the arrangement of its various components. The concern would rather be more on the relationships between the components than on the components themselves, more on the structure than on the elements separately.

One of the special features of the monitoring and evaluation system lies in the fact that it is "disposed" for "symbiotic" reports with scientific research. The monitoring and evaluation system needs the results of scientific research:

- to define indicators (of vulnerability),
- to make interpretation of its own results,
- to valorise or exploit developed methodologies in mapping and survey.

But scientific research needs the results of the monitoring and evaluation system:

- as data for studying processes which is happening on a large scale, to the extent that the study is based on a network of observatories, certainly "light", but sufficiently "representative" of situations likely to be encountered in the country.
- To test the reliability of developed methodological tools, when they are used on a large scale. The final evaluation of the project requires the use of the mapping as well as technical, socio-economic and institutional investigations



Structure of the monitoring and evaluation system

The **historical aspect** (or genetic or dynamic aspect) is linked to the evolving nature of the monitoring and evaluation system. It allows the project to process self-organization. Often, only the history of the system will tell us some of the aspects of its operation. The implementation of multi-criteria analysis of the monitoring and evaluation system allows to represent the operation of this system. To understand its operation eight criteria are retained.

- **Satisfaction of information requests:** it includes both the response to the needs expressed in the terms of reference and the relevance of the field of monitoring as well as of the evaluation in terms of time period, of persons and of geographical areas covered by the report
- **Justification of the method:** This criterion corresponds to the technical quality of the assessment. The design of the evaluation is the result of a series of methodological choices coming from evaluation questions. It is important that all the methodological choices are explained and justified in the report
- **Reliability of Information:** The evaluators use existing data (secondary data) or the primary data that have been collected for the purpose of carrying out this assessment. In this last case, the method applied to collect and process the data is a key factor in assessing the reliability of the data and, finally, their validity.
- **Strength of the analysis:** The analytical approach must be relevant with reference to the type of data collected and must follow the instructions from relevant technical manuals. These elements must be clearly presented in the report.
- **Credibility of findings:** To be credible, the findings should follow logically, and be justified by the data

analysis and interpretations based on exploratory assumptions presented with care.

- **Validity of the conclusions:** The conclusions are more than the results because they imply a judgment on the project merits and weaknesses. The quality of these judgments of value is a condition of the assessment quality in its whole. The judgments of value must be clearly presented in the report.
- **Usefulness of Recommendations:** The recommendations represent the heart of the final message of the report and the sponsor will have to give them an answer. That is why it is of the first importance to have clear recommendations presented with sufficient detail to be implemented correctly.
- **The clarity of information:** The final report is one of the means through which each stakeholder may use the evaluation and take lessons learned. The clarity of the report will depend on the quality of its presentation.

B. Search for improvement points

It is to search for solution path that will satisfy the objectives of the studied system. According to Robert Reix, an information system is a system of social actors that stores and transforms the representations through information technologies and operating modes. Three dimensions are retained for the improvement of this information system:

- **Informational dimension:** That is why the information system is; it concerns rather the mode of representation of information vis-à-vis of the project stakeholders. The Representation has triple functions which are conservation, communication and realization. The major determinants of the representations relevance are the completeness, the reliability, the accuracy, the

- accessibility, the timeliness, the punctuality, the preciseness.
- technological dimension: the monitoring and evaluation system uses information technologies to enter, transmit, store, retrieve, manipulate or display information used in one or more management process. This dimension has three features: storage, processing, communication. The performance of these features can be evaluated under three criteria: by its capacity, by its quality and by its cost.
 - organizational dimension: it is characterized by a set of individuals (participants or actors), an agreement, implicit or explicit, on one or several objectives shared by the different participants or actors in the system, a division of the work defining the role of each participant or actor, a some formalized coordination which ensures the consistency of the behaviour and therefore the respect of common goals despite the division of work
- The manager of the information system or the responsible for the monitoring and evaluation which ensures the control and set up the main guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation system;
 - The computer scientist who is in charge of the studies, diverse technical expertise, the administration, management and operation of the information system.

Whatever, the analysis were enough to power the research on monitoring and evaluation in the systems approach, so that has been observed in this development project intervening in the fight against malnutrition in Madagascar. Monitoring and evaluation of the project should transcend the systemic approach by these devices but what we have perceived is still ideal to the extent that the processes analysis which are involved in this system refers always and primarily to the identification , interaction , control and management of these processes at the project hierarchy to control the whole project.

IV. CONCLUSION

The monitoring and evaluation system should integrate the organizational, the human and the technological dimensions of the information management so that it can achieve its goals as follow:

- A system that "help to decision"
- A system that "aid to the Communication"
- A System that aid to the Knowledge Management

The challenge is to set up a satisfactory solution in terms of both technology and organization, to improve the monitoring and evaluation system already in place that will allow the actor at his workstation, in its situation, to obtain relevant information, to share tacit knowledge and to access information that is necessary to understand and solve problems that the project is encountering, to make decisions, to accomplish its activity and to capitalize on the knowledge generated in the exercise of this activity.

This information system must ensure, to the best, the treatment of the information on management, according to the project expectations as expressed through requests from the direction and/or users. Stakeholders can be differentiated from the role they are play in the management:

- The end user which expresses and defines precisely its needs of information, then implements the uses of them;

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