Community Empowerment

ï»¿

Handbook of Monitoring

by Phil Bartle PhD

ISBN: 92-1-131401-6 â€' UN: HS/545/98

' Tis not enough that justice were done,
For justice is not done
' Til it be seen to be done.

Anonymous

Preface:

This handbook is the result of six years of mobilization and community management training in the Community Management Programme of Uganda, executed by UN-HABITAT (*Habitat*) and implemented by the Directorate of Community Development of the Government of Uganda.

It is designed, however, to be applicable in other countries, so specific situations in Uganda are not emphasized, and the writing style is kept as simple as possible to facilitate being translated into vernacular and local languages around the world.

Many lessons were learned over the years, some by success, some by failure. Through it all we have seen the potential strength and amazing resilience of the communities.

What we have come to realize is that all communities, no matter how poor, have resources (*many that still need to be identified*) that can be tapped, so that they, and all of Uganda, can develop. To tap this huge national resources, mobilization and management training are needed.

Along the way, all the stake holders need to know how well the intervention *(mobilization and management training)* is working. Stake holders include community members, leaders, field mobilizers, coordinators, managers, administrators, planners at local, district and central level.

This hand book, directed mainly at the field workers *(and recommended for all others involved)* provides some guidance, advice, tips, and recommendations for setting up a system of needed monitoring, so as to let them all know how well it is working.

Phil Bartle, Chief Technical Adviser
Laban Mbulamuko, National Coordinator
Uganda Community Management Programme

1992-1998

Introduction:

This handbook, which is a companion to *"Handbook for Mobilizers," and "Handbook to Generate Wealth,"* focuses on the monitoring and evaluation aspects of community strengthening.

To complement the other two handbooks, this one goes into more detail about the purpose and methods of monitoring, from the community level to the national level.

While these three handbooks are intended primarily for community workers in the field, we recommend that they also be read by planners, administrators and managers involved in empowering low income communities.

Like the other two, this is a *"how-to" book.* There is a minimum of description, theory and history; there is an emphasis on skills, methods, and principles.

1. Principles of Monitoring:

This chapter explains what monitoring is and the purposes it serves.

1.1. What is Monitoring?

Monitoring is the regular observation and recording of activities taking place in a project or programme. It is a process of routinely gathering information on all aspects of the project.

To monitor is to check on how project activities are progressing. It is observation â€"â€"systematic and purposeful observation.

Monitoring also involves giving feedback about the progress of the project to the donors, implementors and beneficiaries of the project.

Reporting enables the gathered information to be used in making decisions for improving project performance.

1.2. Purpose of Monitoring:

Monitoring is very important in project planning and implementation.

It is like watching where you are going while riding a bicycle; you can adjust as you go along and ensure that you are on the right track.

Monitoring provides information that will be useful in:

- Analysing the situation in the community and its project;
- Determining whether the inputs in the project are well utilized;
- Identifying problems facing the community or project and finding solutions;
- Ensuring all activities are carried out properly by the right people and in time;
- Using lessons from one project experience on to another; *and*
- Determining whether the way the project was planned is the most appropriate way of solving the problem at hand.

2. Monitoring, Planning and Implementation:

A **project** is a series of activities (*investments*) that aim at solving particular problems within a given time frame and in a particular location.

The **investments** include time, money, human and material resources. Before achieving the **objectives**, a project goes through several stages. Monitoring should take place at and be integrated into all stages of the project cycle.

The three basic stages include:

- **Project planning (*situation analysis, problem identification, definition of the goal, formulating strategies, designing a work plan, and budgeting*);**
- **Project implementation (*mobilization, utilization and control of resources and project operation)*;** *and*
- **Project evaluation.**

Monitoring should be executed by all individuals and institutions which have an interest (*stake holders*) in the project.

To efficiently implement a project, the people planning and implementing it should plan for all the interrelated stages from the beginning.

In the *"Handbook for Mobilizers,"* we said the **key questions** of planning and management were: (1) What do we want?, (2) What do we have?, (3) How do we use what we have to get what we want?, and (4) What will happen when we do?

They can be modified, using *"where,"* instead of *"what,"* while the principles are the same.

The questions become:

> Where are we?
> Where do we want to go?
> How do we get there? *and*
> What happens as we do?

2.1. Situation Analysis and Problem Definition:

This asks the question, *"Where are we?"* (What do we have?).

Situation analysis is a process through which the general characteristics and problems of the community are identified. It involves the identification and definition of the characteristics and problems specific to particular categories of people in the community.

These could be people with disabilities, women, youth, peasants, traders and artisans.

Situation analysis is done through collecting information necessary to understand the community as a whole and individuals within the community.

Information should be collected on what happened in the past, what is currently happening, and what is expected to happen in the future, based on the community's experiences.

Information necessary to understand the community includes, among others:

- Population characteristics *(eg sex, age, tribe, religion and family sizes);*
- Political and administrative structures *(eg community committees and local councils);*
- Economic activities *(including agriculture, trade and fishing);*
- Cultural traditions *(eg inheritance and the clan system),* transitions *(eg marriages, funeral rites),* and rites of passage *(eg circumcision);*
- On-going projects like those of sub-county, district, central Government, non Governmental organizations *(NGOs),* and community based organizations *(CBOs);*
- Socio-economic infrastructure or communal facilities, *(eg schools, health units, and access roads); and*
- Community organizations *(eg savings and credit groups, women groups, self-help groups and burial groups),* their functions and activities.

Information for situation analysis and problem definition should be collected with the involvement of the community members using several techniques.

This is to ensure valid, reliable and comprehensive information about the community and its problems.

Some of the following techniques could be used:

- **Documents review;**
- **Surveys;**
- **Discussions with individuals, specific groups and the community as a whole;**
- **Interviews;**
- **Observations;**
- **Listening to people;**
- **Brainstorming;**
- **Informal conversations;**
- **Village social, resources, services and opportunities;**
- **Transect walks, maps;** and
- **Problem tree.**

Situation analysis is very important before any attempts to solve the problem because:

- **It provides an opportunity to understand the dynamics of the community;**
- **It helps to clarify social, economic, cultural and political conditions;**
- **It provides an initial opportunity for people's participation in all project activities;**
- **It enables the definition of community problems and solutions;** *and*
- **It provides information needed to determine objectives, plan and implement.**

Situation analysis should be continuous, in order to provide additional information during project implementation, monitoring and re-planning. Situation analysis and problem identification should be monitored to ensure that correct and up dated information is always available about the community and its problems.

Since monitoring should be integrated into all aspects or phrases of the process, let us go through each phase and look at the monitoring concerns associated with each.

2.2. Setting Goals and Objectives:

Goal setting asks the question, *"Where do we want to go?"* (*What do we want?*)

Before any attempts to implement a project, the planners, implementors and beneficiaries should set up goals and objectives. See **Brainstorm** for a participatory method to do this.

A goal is a general statement of what should be done to solve a problem. It defines broadly, what is expected out of a project.

A goal emerges from the problem that needs to be addressed and signals the final destination of a project.

Objectives are finite sub-sets of a goal and should be specific, in order to be achievable.

The objectives should be "SMART." They should be:

Specific: clear about what, where, when, and how the situation will be changed;
Measurable: able to quantify the targets and benefits;
Achievable: able to attain the objectives
    (*knowing the resources and capacities at the disposal of the community*);
Realistic: able to obtain the level of change reflected in the objective; *and*
Time bound: stating the time period in which they will each be accomplished.

To achieve the objectives of a project, it is essential to assess the resources available within the community and those that can be accessed from external sources. See **Revealing Hidden Resources**.

The planners, implementors and community members should also identify the constraints they may face in executing the project and how they can overcome them. Based on the extent of the constraints and positive forces, the implementors may decide to continue with the project or to drop it.

The goals and objectives provide the basis for monitoring and evaluating a project.

They are the yardsticks upon which project success or failure is measured.

2.3. Generating Structures and Strategies:

This aspect asks the third **key question**, *"How do we get there?"*
(*How do we get what we want with what we have?*)

The planners and implementors (*communities and their facilitators*) should decide on how they are going to implement a project, which is the strategy.

Agreeing on the strategy involves determining all items (*inputs*) that are needed to carry out the project, defining the different groups or individuals and their particular roles they are to play in the project. These groups and individuals that undertake particular roles in the project are called "*actors*."

Generating the structures and strategies therefore involves:

- **Discussing and agreeing on the activities to be undertaken during implementation;**
- **Defining the different actors and outside the community, and their roles;** *and*
- **Defining and distributing costs and materials necessary to implement the project.**

After establishing the appropriateness of the decisions, the executive should discuss and agree with all actors on how the project will be implemented.

This is called designing a work plan. *(How do we get what we want?).*

A work plan is a description of the necessary activities set out in stages, with rough indication of the timing.

In order to draw a good work plan, the implementors should:

- **List all the tasks required to implement a project;**
- **Put the tasks in the order in which they will be implemented;**
- **Show allocation of the responsibilities to the actors;** *and*
- **Give the timing of each activity.**

The work plan is a guide to project implementation and a basis for project monitoring. It therefore helps to:

- **Finish the project in time;**
- **Do the right things in the right order;**
- **Identify who will be responsible for what activity;** *and*
- **Determine when to start project implementation.**

The implementors and planners have to agree on monitoring indicators. Monitoring indicators are quantitative and qualitative signs (*criteria*) for measuring or assessing the achievement of project activities and objectives.

The indicators will show the extent to which the objectives of every activity have been achieved. Monitoring indicators should be explicit, pertinent and objectively verifiable.

Monitoring Indicators are of four types, namely;

- **Input indicators**: describe what goes on in the project *(eg number of bricks brought on site and amount of money spent);*

- **Output indicators**: describe the project activity *(eg number of classrooms built);*

- **Outcome indicators**: describe the product of the activity *(eg number of pupils attending the school);* and

- **Impact indicators**: measure change in conditions of the community *(eg reduced illiteracy in the community).*

Writing down the structures and strategies helps in project monitoring because they specify what will be done during project implementation.

Planning must indicate what should be monitored, who should monitor, and how monitoring should be undertaken.

2.4. Implementation:

Monitoring implementation asks the fourth key question "*What happens when we do*?"

Implementation is the stage where all the planned activities are put into action. Before the implementation of a project, the implementors (*spearheaded by the project committee or executive*) should identify their strength and weaknesses (*internal forces*), opportunities and threats (*external forces*).

The strength and opportunities are positive forces that should be exploited to efficiently implement a project. The weaknesses and threats are hindrances that can hamper project implementation. The implementors should ensure that they devise means of overcoming them.

Monitoring is important at this implementation phase to ensure that the project is implemented as per the schedule. This is a continuous process that should be put in place before project implementation starts.

As such, the monitoring activities should appear on the work plan and should involve all stake holders. If activities are not going on well, arrangements should be made to identify the problem so that they can be corrected.

Monitoring is also important to ensure that activities are implemented as planned. This helps the implementors to measure how well they are achieving their targets. This is based on the understanding that the process through which a project is implemented has a lot of effect on its use, operation and maintenance.

Therefore implementation of the project on target is not satisfactory hence a need for implementors to ask themselves and answer the question, *"How well do we get there?"* (What happens when we do?)

2.5. Summary of the Relationship:

The above illustrates the close relationship between monitoring, planning and implementation. It demonstrates that:

- **Planning** describes ways which implementation and monitoring should be done;
- **Implementation** and monitoring are guided by the project work plan; *and*
- **Monitoring** provides information for project planning and implementation.

There is a close and mutually reinforcing (*supportive*) relationship between planning, implementation and monitoring.

One of the three cannot be done in isolation from the other two, and when doing one of the three, the planners and implementors have to cater for the others.

3. Evaluation:

Evaluation differs from **monitoring**, but they are closely related.

3.1. The Meaning of Evaluation:

Evaluation is a process of judging value on what a project or programme has achieved particularly in relation to activities planned and overall objectives.

It involves value judgement and hence it is different from monitoring (*which is observation and reporting of observations*).

3.2. Purpose of Evaluation:

Evaluation is important to identify the constraints or bottlenecks that hinder the project in achieving its objectives. Solutions to the constraints can then be identified and implemented.

Assessing the benefits and costs that accrue to the intended direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project. If the project implemented is for example, the protection of a spring, evaluation highlights the people who fetch and use water and the people whose land is wasted and whose crops are destroyed during the process of water collection.

Drawing lessons from the project implementation experience and using the lessons in re-planning of projects in that community and elsewhere; *and*

Providing a clear picture of the extent to which the intended objectives of the activities and project have been realized.

3.3. The Process of Evaluation:

Evaluation can be done: (a) before, (b) during, and (c) after implementation.

Before project implementation, evaluation is needed in order to:

- **Assess the possible consequences of the planned project(s) to the people in the community over a period of time;**
- **Make a final decision on what project alternative should be implemented;** *and*
- **Assist in making decisions on how the project will be implemented.**

During project implementation: Evaluation should be a continuous process and should take place in all project implementation activities.

This enables the project planners and implementors to progressively review the project strategies according to the changing circumstances in order to attain the desired activity and project objectives.

After project implementation: This is to retrace the project planning and implementation process, and results after project implementation. This further helps in:

- Identifying constraints or bottlenecks inherent in the implementation phase;

- Assessing the actual benefits and the number of people who benefited;

- Providing ideas on the strength of the project, for replication; *and*

- Providing a clear picture of the extent to which the intended objectives of the project have been realized.

4: Management Information:

Management information and information management are different; management information is a kind of information *(the data);* information management is a kind of management *(the system).*

Information management is the process of analysing and using information which has been collected and stored in order to enable managers (*at all levels*) to make informed decisions. Management information is the information needed in order to make management decisions.

Monitoring provides information about what is going on in the project.

This information is collected during the planning and implementation phases. The information helps to detect if anything is going wrong in the project. Management can therefore find solutions to ensure success.

4.1. The Importance of Management Information:

Management Information is important to:

- Make decisions necessary to improve management of facilities and services; *and*

- Implement participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

4.2. How to Use Information Management:

To be able to use information to make management decisions, the information should be managed *(collected, stored and analysed)*. Whereas information management *(the process of collecting and storing information)* and management information *(the information needed to make informed decisions)* are different; they always reinforce each other and cannot be separated in day to day operations.

Management information therefore involves:

- **determining information needed;**
- **collecting and analysing information;**
- **storing and retrieving it when needed;**
- **using it;** *and*
- **disseminating it.**

Determining Information Needed for Management: During project planning, management and monitoring, much information is generated. Some is needed for making management decisions on spot; other for later management decisions.

A good management information system should therefore assist the project managers to know the information they need to collect, for different management decisions at different times.

Collecting and Analysing Information for Information Management: Information can be got from reports of technical people, village books, forms filled by the different actors, community meetings, interviews, observation and community maps.

Storing Information: It is important to store information for further references. Information can be stored in the village book, project reports, forms and in the mind. The major principle in information storage is the ease in which it can be retrieved.

Using Information: Information can be used for solving community problems, determining resources *(amount and nature),* soliciting for their support and determining future projects.

Dissemination or Flow of Information: For information to be adequately used it needs to be shared with other stake holders or users. The other stake holders can also use this information for their management decisions and they can help the one collecting information to draw meaning and use out of it for management purposes.

Information should be shared between the village, parish, sub-county, district, national office, NGOs and the donor.

Management information is part and parcel of monitoring because such information is got during monitoring and helps in the planning and implementation of monitoring activities.

5. Participation in Project Monitoring:

Monitoring is a vital management role that cannot be left to one stake holder.

Therefore as many individuals and institutions as possible that have any interest in the project, at all levels, must participate in monitoring.

5.1. Advantages of Participation:

The advantages of participation in monitoring include: (a) a common undertaking, (b) enhancing accountability, (c) better decisions, (d) performance improvement, (e) improved design, and (f) more information.

Common Understanding of Problems and Identification of Solutions: Participative monitoring helps stake holders to get a shared understanding of the problems facing the community or project (*their causes, magnitude, effects and implications*).

This facilitates the identification of solutions. These solutions are more likely to be appropriate because they are derived from a current situation.

Benefits the Target Groups and Enhances Accountability: Participation in monitoring ensures that the people to which the project was intended are the ones benefiting from it.

It increases the awareness of people's rights, which elicits their participation in guarding against project resource misappropriation. Guarding against resource misappropriation makes project implementation less expensive.

Making Appropriate Decisions: Monitoring provides information necessary in making management decisions.

When many people participate in monitoring it means that they have participated in providing management information and contributed to decision making. The decisions from this are more likely to be acceptable and relevant to the majority of the population. This makes human and resource mobilization for project implementation easier.

Performance Improvement During Monitoring: if a performance deviation is discovered solutions can be devised. To find appropriate decisions that can be implemented requires the participation of those people who will put the solution into practice.

Therefore participation in monitoring can help improve project performance.

Design of Projects: The information generated during project monitoring helps in re-designing projects in that locality to make them more acceptable.

The lessons learned can also be used in the design of similar projects elsewhere.

Collection of Information: If many people participate in monitoring they are more likely to come up with more accurate information. This is because, information that is omitted by one party, can be collected by the other.

Each stake holder is putting varying emphasis on the different aspects of the project using different methods. Alternatively, one party knowing that the information they are collecting will be verified, forestalls deliberate wrong reporting.

5.2. Challenges of Participation in Monitoring:

Whereas participation in monitoring has a number of virtues, it is likely to face a number of challenges.

The challenges include: (a) high costs, (b) variations in information, and (c) inaccuracies.

High Initial Costs: Participation in monitoring requires many resources *(eg time, transport and performance-related allowances).*

It is a demanding process that can over-stretch volunteer spirit at community level and financial resources at district and national levels. Therefore it must be simple and focussed to vital elements.

Quantity and Variety of Information: Monitoring requires collection, documentation and sharing of a wide range of information.

This requires many skills that are lacking in the communities. It therefore necessitates much time and resources for capacity building. It also risks wrong reporting.

Inaccuracy of Information: Some stake holders, from the community to the national level, may intentionally provide wrong information to depict better performance and outputs or because of community or project differences.

To counteract wrong or incorrect reporting needs sensitization and consensus building that is difficult to attain.

The advantages of participation in monitoring are evidently more than the challenges.

It is therefore necessary to encourage and support participatory monitoring as we devise means to counteract the challenges.

6. Levels of Monitoring:

Monitoring should be carried out by all stake holders at all levels. Each level, however, has specific objectives for monitoring, methods and therefore roles.

For monitoring to be effective, there is need for a mechanism of giving feedback to all people involved at all levels (*community, district, national and donor*).

6.1. Monitoring at Community Level:

Community level is where implementation and utilization of the benefits of the project take place. In most cases it is the village and parish level. At this level, the major purpose of monitoring is to improve the implementation and management of projects. The interest of the community as a whole in monitoring school construction, for example, is to ensure that the construction of the school (*an output*) is being done as planned.

The specific objectives for monitoring at this level therefore include, (a) ensuring that the projects are implemented on time, (b) that they are of good quality and (c) that the project inputs are well utilized.

Monitoring at this level involves:

Identifying a community project. This should be identified in a participatory manner to reflect the community needs and stimulate people's interest in its implementation and monitoring.

If the process of project identification is not well done and does not reflect community interests, it is likely that the communities will not participate in the monitoring of the implementation activities;

Identifying the team(s) to spearhead the monitoring of the project in the community.

The roles of each team, how they should carry out the monitoring process, the use and sharing of information generated with other groups within and without the community, should be specified and explained;

Design a work plan that guides project monitoring. The work plan should specify the activities in the order that they will be executed and the individuals to execute them.

This helps the people monitoring to know the activities that should be carried out by particular individuals in a given period of time. If the activities are not carried out, the people monitoring get guidance in coming up with solution(s);

Determine the major activities from the work plan. Whereas all activities in the work plan are necessary and should be monitored, it is useful to identify the major activities on the basis of which objectives and indicators would be set.

For example if the preparatory activities in a school construction project include, community mobilization, borrowing of hoes from the neighbouring village, digging of the soil and fetching of water for brick making, the major activity summarizing all the sub-activities could be brick making.

Determine the indicators for each activity objective. The indicators help the that team monitoring to tell how far they have gone in achieving the objectives of each activity. In our example, one indicator could be the number of bricks made. *and*

Compare what is happening with what was planned should be done in the process to tell whether the project is on schedule and as planned. The monitors should check at the indicators to measure how far they have reached in achieving the objectives. This should involve looking at the quality of work to ensure that it is good. The monitoring team may need to involve a technical person like a local artisan or a technician from the district to ascertain the quality of the project (*if it is of a construction*).

The monitoring team should then agree on how often they should visit the project site as a means of verifying what is taking place.

For a community project, to avoid big deviations from the work plan, monitoring visits should be carried out at least once a week. During the project visits, the team should look at what is happening (*observe*) and talk to every body who is involved in the project;

For each activity, the monitoring team should identify the objectives.

For example the objective of brick making as an activity during the school construction project could be; to make ten thousand bricks by the end of February.

Whenever a monitoring visit is carried out, those monitoring should write down what their findings. They can use a form attached in the annex or agree on any other reporting format that captures the findings of the exercise in relation to the work plan.

The findings from the monitoring visits should be discussed with other members of the implementation committee. The monitoring and implementation teams should use the information collected to detect and solve the problems facing the project.

The monitoring and implementation teams should store the information well and use it for future actions and to inform other stake holders.

At each site there should be a file in which copies of monitoring reports and other documents related to the project are kept.

6.2. Monitoring at District and Sub-County Level:

The district and sub-county officials should get information from the community monitoring *(monitoring performance in relation to turning the inputs into outputs).*

They should also monitor the outcome of the project (*eg the effect of school construction on the enrolment levels*). The district should also monitor the increase in strength, capacity and power of the target community to stimulate its own development.

The objectives therefore include: supporting the improvement in project performance and measuring the applicability of the way the project was designed in relation to community strengthening.

The methods for monitoring that can be adopted at this level include (a) routine monitoring and (b) qualitative support.

Routine Monitoring and Supervisory Support: This requires the District Project Coordinator, Community Development Assistant, other technical staff and politicians at the district and sub-county to visit the project sites to ascertain what is happening in relation to what was planned.

A copy of the work plan and community monitoring reports should be kept in the project site file. This will help whomever wants to compare progress with the work plan and get comments of the monitoring team to do so without necessarily tracing the members of the monitoring team who may not be readily available.

During routine monitoring, discussions should be made with all the people involved in the implementation and monitoring of the project. Look at the manner in which each team performs its duties (*as a means of verifying the increase in community capacity*).

Make and record comments about good and bad elements in the project. Recommend solutions showing who should undertake them, with financial, time and the negative effects that may accrue to the project if they are not taken. A copy of the comments should be left in the project site file/book and the other discussed and filed at the district.

The sub-counties and districts should organize discussions of project progress at least once a month.

Also file and submit a project progress report as part of the routine monthly reporting to the district and national office respectively.

The major issues to look at during the district and sub-county routine monitoring include;

- Levels of actual community, sub-county, district and donor contributions (*including funds, materials, time and expertise*);
- Timely implementation and quality of projects;
- Appropriate use and accountability of community and donor resources;
- Level of community involvement in the project;
- Commitment and performance of community committees; *and*
- Timely use of information generated through the community routine monitoring.

Qualitative Enquiry: The district, in liaison with the sub-county, should organize Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, and Community Group Discussions, with communities and other key informants at least twice a year.

These enquiries would help the district to:

- Verify some of the information collected by the community and district;
- Get information on issues that are not captured during the routine monitoring;
- Discuss on spot with the communities on possible solutions to problems hindering project performance; *and*
- Discuss with the community, learn from them, explain capacity building issues.

These qualitative enquiries should be simple and involve the community members to reduce the costs and enable the community members to learn how to conduct them as a means of community strengthening. The outputs should be analysed in relation to the community and routine district findings and should also be used to discuss solutions.

Findings should be well documented and shared at the national level in order to assist national level management information.

The major issues during the qualitative enquiries include:

- Establishing whether the projects were the community priorities (*also the appropriateness of the project identification*);
- Community members' knowledge and appreciation of the project methodology, and their willingness to participate and contribute to the project activities;
- Effectiveness of the community members during project monitoring;
- Opinions of community members on quality and use of resources (accountability);
- Skills (*eg decision making capacity and negotiation skills),* acquired by specific categories of people in the community during project implementation; *and*
- Community knowledge of their rights and obligations.

Before qualitative enquiries, each district and sub-county should identify and discuss any management information gaps to form periodic themes.

Specific designs would also be agreed upon at this stage.

6.3. Monitoring at National and Donor level:

Monitoring at the national and donor level is to find out if project inputs are well used (*desired outputs are being realized*), project design is appropriate, and for learning.

The objectives of monitoring at this level include:

- **To ensure that the inputs for are efficiently and effectively utilized.**
- **That the planned activities are being realized;**
- **To measure the applicability of the methodology to community strengthening;** *and*
- **To draw lessons from the project intervention for future projects in the country and beyond. The lessons will provide the basis for project methodology replication.**

The methods for monitoring at this level include: (a) routine monitoring, (b) action research and qualitative enquiries, and (c) surveys.

Routine Monitoring: Routine monitoring should be done on a quarterly basis by project staff and the ministry's planning unit to check on the levels of activities and objectives. Since the national level gets information about the projects and activities through monthly district progress reports, national routine monitoring should be limited in scope.

It should cover aspects that appear contradictory, problematic, very satisfactory or unique. These would enable the national office to provide the necessary support and draw lessons.

Action Research and Qualitative Enquiries: The national office should carry out in-depth qualitative enquiries once a year.

These should focus on drawing lessons from the project design and implementation experiences for replication.

Therefore, the major issues at this level include:

- **The contribution of community projects on national and donor priorities;**
- **Satisfaction derived by the communities (*levels of service and facility utilization*);**
- **Capacity of the community to operate and maintain the services and facilities;**
- **Ability of the community members to pay for the services and facilities;**
- **Appropriateness of the project methodology in light of national policies;**
- **Leadership, authority and confidence within communities;**
- **Capacity building and functioning of local governments and district personnel;**
- **Representation (*especially of women*) in the community decision making process;**
- **Replication of experiences in other projects and training institutions;**
- **Capacity building of existing individuals and institutions; *and***
- **The functioning of the monitoring and management information systems.**

Surveys: **Surveys should also be conducted to gather quantifiable data and supplement the information generated through other methods. These can be contracted to research institutions such as at universities.**

6.4. Monitoring Issues and Procedures at Different Levels:

Monitoring issues and procedures are described here for each level. This is to emphasize that the stake holders should spearhead but not exclusively carry out all monitoring. In practice, the issues and procedures of the different stake holders overlap. Each stake holder should support others in monitoring responsibilities.

Issues mentioned in this section are not exhaustive but indicate what should be done. Each level should therefore collect information on any other issues deemed relevant to the particular situations.

These are presented as three tables (1) community level, (2) district level, and (3) national level, indicating the key issues at each level.

6.5. Community Level:

At the community level the three main actors who have a stake in the community strengthening intervention are the:

- **CBO Executive or Implementing Committee** *(CIC)* of the community project;
- **Community mobilizers;** *and*
- **Parish Development Committee** *(PDC).*

The following table looks at the main issues of interest, monitoring indicators, means of observing, frequency, and suggested monitoring procedures, for each of these three stake holders.

Stakeholder	Issue	Monitoring Indicator	Means of Observing	Freq.	Monitoring Procedure
Executive Committee	Timely Implementation of Projects	Number of project activities implemented in time	Routine project visits	Weekly	Members use routine monitoring form
	Appropriate use of project resources	No materials misused	Routine project visits. Project quality checks	Weekly	Members use routine monitoring form. Check quality using the technician's guidelines
	Proper collection and storage of project information	Percentage of projects with project site files; number of reports in site files	Reviewing the project site files	Weekly	Members of the project committee review the project site file, reports and comments
Community Mobilizers	Realistic project implementation work plan	Number of project work plans with well sequenced activities	Compare activities in the work plan with how they are implemented	Monthly	Mobilizers (1) review sequence of project work plans with a technical person, and (2) conduct monthly project site visits
	Community participation in project activities	Number of persons performing their roles	Number of activities. Amount of resources provided by the community	Monthly	Project site visits; Discussions with people about their contributions.
Parish Developm'nt Committee	Accountability of Project Resources	Percentage of resources accounted for	Resource accountability form	Quarterly	PDC members use project resource accountability form

6.6. Sub-County and District Level:

At the district and sub district *(more than one community)* level, the main actors who have a stake in the community strengthening intervention are the:

- Community Development Assistants *(CDAs);*
- Planning Unit; *and*
- District Project Coordinator, *(DPC)* who, if a ministry official, is usually a Community Development officer *(CDO),* or an NGO equivalent.

The following table looks at the main issues of interest, monitoring indicators, means of observing, frequency, and suggested monitoring procedures, for each of these three stake holders.

Stakeholder	Issue	Monitoring Indicator	Means of Verification	Freq.	Monitoring Procedure
Community Development Assistant	Functioning of mobilizers and community committees	Number of committees performing their roles	Review of each committee's performance	Twice a year	CDA during the qualitative enquiries determine the performance of each committee
District Project Coordinator *and* Planning Unit	Identification of projects that fall in the district plan and national priorities	Number of projects under the district plan	Review of project identification reports. Project visits	Twice a year	The planning unit reviews the plans from the parishes, to establish if they fall under the district plan and national priority areas
	Community leaders acquisition of community management skills	Number of villages using community participation in planning and implementing projects	Review of project reports. Focus group discussions and other qualitative enquiry techniques	Twice a year	Planning unit conducts qualitative enquiries to find out if communities are participating in project activities. District specific procedures must be designed when exercises take place

6.7. National and Donor Level:

At the national or country level, there are two main stake holders, (1) The ministry or agency that is implementing the intervention or project, and (2) any external national or international donors that are contributing to the intervention or project.

Stakeholder	Issue	Monitoring Indicator	Means of Verification	Freq.	Monitoring Procedure

	Community knowledge of methodology	Proportion of people aware of the methodology	Surveys, focus group, discussions, key informant interviews	Annually	Agency or Ministry design and conduct the annual studies
National Office and Donors	**Effectiveness of the project design**	Percentage of project outputs attained. Percentage of design aspects appreciated by the community	Review of project reports, Surveys, Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews	Annually	Agency or Ministry design and conduct the annual studies
	Adaptation of implementation experiences by other projects and institutions in the country	Proportion of the project design aspects adapted	National and international discussions	Annually	Agency or Ministry conducts meetings with academic institutions and community projects to find out the methodological aspects that have been replicated

7. Reporting:

Reporting is a major activity during project monitoring. It is the way in which information about the process and output of activities, and not just the activities, is shared between the stake holders of the project. See also **Report Writing**.

In case of the school construction project, reporting does not end at mentioning the number of times the community met to make bricks and build the school walls, but also mentions the number of bricks and school walls that were constructed plus the process through which they were accomplished.

In community projects, reporting is mainly done through two ways: verbal and written.

7.1. Verbal Reporting:

This is a process where reporting is done orally. It is the commonest means of reporting.

The community members find it easier and more effective to communicate to others in words.

The advantages of verbal reporting are:

- **The ability for a wider proportion of the community to participate.** Many community members especially in rural areas are illiterate and cannot write. Those that can write find the writing of reports time and resource consuming which makes them reluctant to document all the information acquired during project monitoring.

- **Clarity and timely distribution of information.** Verbal reporting is always done immediately after an event. This makes the information arising out of the process to be relatively valid, reliable and up to-date than the information that is documented. The people that give the reports, get an opportunity to discuss with the community and get immediate feedback. This helps in decision making.

- **Low cost.** Verbal reporting cuts down significantly the time and other resources spent on reporting.

The challenges of verbal reporting include:

- **Wrong reporting.** Some community members may deliberately disseminate wrong information verbally to protect their interests. Verbal reporting is so tempting because a person reporting knows that no body will disqualify the reports. In other cases the people giving the information are not given the time to think through the responses.

- **Storage, replication and consistency:** Since during verbal reporting information is neither documented nor recorded, it is very difficult to keep and retrieve it for further use. This information is only kept in the minds of people who participated in the implementation of the project. This therefore makes it difficult to share the information with people beyond the community especially in instances where those people who know the information cannot or are not willing to reveal it. The information collected is also not likely to be consistent especially in cases where past information is needed to generate new data.

7.2. Written Reporting:

During monitoring it is important to report about the results of activities not just the activities.

Write what you observe, along with reviewing reports of technical people.

The advantages of written reports are:

- They provide reliable information for management purposes (*Written reports can be cross-checked over time with other information to ascertain accuracy*);

- They help to provide information from the technical people; *and*

- The reports that are written are easy to manage.

The challenges of written reports are:

- **Day to day writing during project monitoring activities is always ignored;** *and*
- **Documentation of reports is very costly both in time and money.**

7.3. Reporting Roles of Key Stake holders:

Community level:

Project Committees:

- **Design and publicize (*in liaison with mobilizers*) the project implementation work plan to the, Parish Development Committee, Local Councils and the community;**
- **Compile and publicize the monthly project progress reports to the Parish Development Committee, Local Councils at village and parish level and Community Development Assistant;** *and*
- **Keep the project site file (*including the work plans, monitoring reports and any other specific project information*) for each project.**

Community Mobilizers:

- **Prepare reports about village level project identification process and submit copies to the Parish Development Committee and the Community Development Assistant;**
- **Collect and submit reports about the community and specific individuals in the community;** *and*
- **Submit reports on all training conducted in the community.**

Parish Development Committees:

- **Give an up-date about projects in the parish to the community in local council meeting;**
- **Report to community and CDA about resources and how they are used in each project;**
- **Submit an annual report to the CDA on the main actors in the community projects.**

Local Council One and Two:

- **Document minutes of council and executive meetings for their management decisions and use by the sub-county, district and national teams.**

Sub-County and District Level:

Community Development Assistant:

- **Submits a monthly summary of project progress reports to the district;**
- **Report on status and functioning of community mobilizers, project committees and parish development committees;**
- **Submits a summary of training conducted by mobilizers and to the mobilizers;**
- **Submits a report on the main contributors in the community projects to the district.**

Community Development Officer (*District Coordinator*):

- **Submits a monthly summary of district progress reports to the national office.**

National Office:

National Coordinator:

- **Submits half year progress reports in the country to the national steering committee, ministry and donors;**
- **Prepares up-dates of project activities and outputs and submits copies to each district, who in turn publicize the report to the sub-counties and parishes.**

- **Submits SWOT (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats*) reports twice a year on the strength and weaknesses of the project design to the ministry and donors. Include bad and good implementation experiences. May be part of the six month report;**
- **Compiles and publicizes survey and qualitative enquiry findings whenever such studies are conducted.**

â€'â€'Â» Â«â€'â€'