

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**

**SCHOOL OF COMMERCE**



**Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice: *The***  
***Case of AIDS Healthcare Foundation - Ethiopia***

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for Master's of Arts**  
**Degree in Project Management**

**Advisor: Dr Abdurezak Mohammed**

**Prepared By: Melia Getachew**

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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**June, 2023**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Melia Getachew, declare that this research project work titled “Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice: The case of AIDS Healthcare Foundation-Ethiopia” is my authentic undertaking where all sources used for this research project work having been properly recognized. With the help of my research advisor, who provided advice and criticism, I carried out the study independently.

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Confirmed by Advisor:

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date of submission: \_\_\_\_\_

## **STATEMENT OF CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that Melia Getachew has completed her project research with the title “Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practice: The Case of AIDS Healthcare Foundation- Ethiopia” for the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of a Master's Degree in PROJECT MANAGEMENT, and that her work complies with the University's rules and standards for originality and quality.

Advisor: Dr Abdurezak Mohammed

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**Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning  
practice: The Case of AIDS Healthcare Foundation - Ethiopia**

**By**

**Melia Getachew**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AHF – AIDS Healthcare Foundation

IFC –International Finance Corporation

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

IRC – International Rescue Committee

M & E - Monitoring and Evaluation

MDAT – Multi- Disciplinary action team

MEAL – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

NGO – Non Governmental Organization

OECD - Organization for Economic Co- operation Development

PIP – Performance Improvement plan

PMBOK – Project Management Body of Knowledge

SNNPR- Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region

UNDP - United Nation Development Program

USAID – U.S Agency for International Development

WHO – World Health Organization

## ABSTRACT

*The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Framework is a crucial tool for organizations to monitor and evaluate the performance and results of their programs. The aim of this research project work was to assess the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice at AIDS Healthcare Foundation – Ethiopia. A descriptive design using mixed approach was adopted. Questionnaire and document review were used as primary and secondary data source respectively. Census method was adopted where 33 respondents from the organization's workforce participated in filling out the questionnaire. The study's findings show that while the organization has a solid Monitoring and Evaluation system, the framework's accountability and learning elements are still in their infancy. The staff members executing MEAL activities do not receive regular updates or training on MEAL practice, and there is no integrated MEAL plan. The study also revealed that there are impediments to communication while MEAL activities are being carried out, a lack of staff familiarity with MEAL framework, and a lack of resources to adequately evaluate and present the data in time for decision-making. The organization must therefore develop a MEAL plan that is properly tailored to its requirements. To reach a consensus about the MEAL activities taking place within the organization, the staff needs to be sensitized. Furthermore, there should be sufficient personnel and time to plan, execute, analyze, and present the outcomes of MEAL operations.*

Key words: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning, MEAL practice

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

In order to understand the different functions of Project Management, one must begin with the definition project. According to Wysocki (2014), a project is an activity that is intended to produce a novel product or service and is constrained by time, cost, and financial resources. These three elements constitute the Iron Triangle, also known as the Project's Triple Constraints.

The definition of project management given on page 10 of the PMBOK® Guide (2017) is the process of applying knowledge, skill, resources, methods, and tools to project operations in order to fulfill project requirements. Project management includes starting a project, planning it, carrying it out, monitoring it, and finishing it. The primary goal of project management is to offer a good or a service that the customer is satisfied with while completing the project's objectives within the allotted time and budgetary constraints. (Kerzner, 2009)

Every project has a cycle in which the planning and execution follow a predetermined sequence and a mutually agreed-upon plan. As a result, the idea for a particular action with the intention of accomplishing a set of goals is generated. This action is then designed, implemented, and assessed with the goal of refining the strategy and succeeding action. Controlling every stage of a project requires extensive knowledge of project management. Crawford and Brye (2003) indicated that monitoring is a continuous process of data gathering and analysis for primary project control with a focus on internal project efficiency. According to Uitto (2004), Evaluation is a methodical and independent process.

It is a review of a current or finished project, including its execution and outcomes. According to Gorgens and Kusek (2009), Monitoring and evaluation is the integration of two distinct yet complimentary procedures.

The project management control functions include monitoring and, to some extent, evaluation. Due to the frequent feedback the organization receives, it is able to monitor costs, personnel, implementation timelines, organizational development, economic and financial results, and compare actual performance to goals. (Hunter, 2009). Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are primarily based on their capacity to monitor performance and deliver real-time data for management decision-making. Although very important for performance improvement, it is also quite complicated, diverse, and involves processes that require a lot of talent (Hunter, 2009).

All projects, large or small, can benefit from monitoring and evaluation (M&E), a key element of project cycle management that aids in identifying project sections that are on track and those that require adjustment or replacement.

Different companies may refer to monitoring and evaluation systems by different names (M&E framework, M&E approach, MEL, or MEAL), but they play a crucial role in designing, choosing, gathering, evaluating, and utilizing information for a range of purposes throughout the life of projects and programs. (INTRAC 2016). For different projects, different M&E systems are required. However, the most popular method for project monitoring and evaluation is based on the Logical Framework Approach (World Bank, 2012).

Morris and Lawrence (2010) state that learning is an essential characteristics of an adaptive organization. Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks provide valuable data and lived experience to allow such learning to take place. This allow for continuous process and systems improvement within an organizations.

Building a resilient Monitoring and evaluation system is essential to meeting the increasing need for performance improvement. NGOs and donors also use this system to monitor the projects' impact and benefits, as well as the efficient use of donor funding. As a result, Guidelines for minimal project monitoring and evaluation metrics that can be utilized to gauge development and effectiveness must therefore be defined (World Bank, 2012).

It is an undeniable fact that developing and keeping up an efficient monitoring and evaluation system is challenging because it calls for ongoing commitment, champions, time, effort, and resources. Additionally, it could take a few tries before the system can be modified to fit a certain organizational or governmental strategy, program, or project; nonetheless, it is possible. (Kusek, 2004).

## 1.2 Background of the study organization

AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), an international nonprofit non-governmental organization that plays a pivotal role in providing comprehensive HIV prevention care and treatment and advocacy across the globe for 1.6 million people. It began its work in Ethiopia 8 year ago after being registered as a charity organization as per the indicated proclamation. In Ethiopia, AHF has one stand-alone clinic where it provides HIV prevention care and treatment to nearly 3600 clients. Aside from the stand alone clinic, it also provides technical support to selected government health centers and federal hospitals. It is currently working in 4 different regions Addis Ababa, Oromia, SNNPR and Amhara

regions providing HIV prevention care and treatment support to a total of close to 40,000 clients who are living with HIV.

AHF has a Monitoring and Evaluation system with pre-set indicators to track progress of the program. The Monitoring and evaluation team generates required reports to Africa bureau weekly, monthly and quarterly.

For the aforementioned reason, a strong Monitoring and Evaluation system is required to ensure program goals are being met that align with organization Vision and mission. This study attempts to assess the practice and challenges of monitoring, evaluation and learning encountered at AHF Ethiopia.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Systems for monitoring and evaluating progress on projects and programs offer crucial input. Specifically, the accomplishment or failure of projects, programs, and policies over the course of the relevant life cycles. Decision-makers can utilize these systems as a potent, ongoing management tool to boost productivity and show outcomes. (Kerzner, 2009)

The foundation of knowledge in a learning organization emanates from its Monitoring and Evaluation system. It enables governments and organizations to expand their understanding of the types of initiatives, plans, and regulations that are successful, as well as, more frequently, what works and what doesn't and why. Additionally, it can provide ongoing feedback in the management of monitoring and assessing progress towards a specific goal. (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

These systems, according to Kalichman (2003) are actually one of the "techniques" for controlling program/project implementation, particularly because they give project

management an early warning about prospective or actual difficulties. A program or project's underlying assumptions and strategy may then come under scrutiny when issues are discovered. They help development managers make decisions on how to manage projects and programs in this way. According to Kerzner (2009), monitoring and evaluation systems can also help to foster better accountability and openness inside businesses and the government.

Mbeche (2006) argues that a reliable system and procedure for monitoring and evaluating allows for informed decision making and documentation of lesson learnt for future capitalization on the knowledge gained for program design and implementation. Organizations gain important insight from previous and continuing actions that serve as a foundation for program fine-tuning, reorientation and future planning. (UNDP, 2009).

Monitoring and evaluation, according to IFC (2008), face a number of difficulties, including lack of commitment and experience, lack of staff and financial resources, lack of technical expertise in defining performance indicators, the retrieval, collection, preparation, and interpretation of data, and leading to ineffective monitoring and evaluation procedures. Kerzner (2009) concurs that successful M&E system must have sufficient trained personnel and financial resources. A Failure to make sure a fair number of resources is allocated to this project management component is likely to inhibit internal learning and lead to subpar M&E system performance. Ethiopia's monitoring and evaluation capacity assessment currently in place reveals weaknesses both at institutional and individual level in terms of skill for monitoring and evaluation. (World Bank, 2006)

Although there is agreement that a different organizations have a MEAL system with common attributes, there is recommendations for tailoring the system and practice to match

particular organizational, program, and project circumstances. (Bakewell, 2003). Tenagn et al (2018) further strengthens the above argument by stating that having a Monitoring and Evaluation system that is appropriate for the project is one of the key factors in its success.

It is evident that some organizations have begun referring to their M&E systems as MEAL, adding accountability and a learning component, practice and research suggest that the focus placed on generating and using findings to advance knowledge is less evident (Zhou, 2013). Researchers argue that the conception as well as the practice of the MEAL framework is underdeveloped. There is also limited publishing in the Ethiopian context. In order to close that gap, this research project effort was done. The study's objective was to provide information about the AIDS Healthcare Foundation-Ethiopia's current Monitoring, Evaluating, Accountability, and Learning practice. Additionally, it was also thought to help the organization enhance its current practices by pointing out any gaps.

#### 1.4 Research questions

The following queries are what the study aimed to address.

1. What is the existing Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practice at AHF Ethiopia?
2. What are the challenges faced that are affecting the implementation of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning at AHF Ethiopia?

#### 1.5 Objective of the Study

The study's overall objective was to assess the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practice and Challenges at AIDS Healthcare Foundation- Ethiopia.

The Specific objectives of the research work were:-

1. To assess the existing Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice at AHF Ethiopia
2. To examine the challenges that affect the implementation of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning at AHF Ethiopia

### 1.6 Significance of the study

This study has contributed in supplying a documented MEAL framework and process of implementation that are currently supporting the Program at AIDS Healthcare Foundation-Ethiopia. The organization will in fact gain from the recommendations presented here in order to make further advancements and adjustments to its current practice.

It would inform policy makers towards setting up monitoring and evaluation system that adopts the MEAL framework as a powerful management tool to aid organizations achieve greater accountability to its stakeholders and becoming a learning organization through the process of continuous improvement. The study will be beneficial to practioners and students who are involved in the designing and implementation of effective M&E systems

The study will also contribute as a reference or starting point for other researchers to adapt different research design and investigate the relationship between different variables.

### 1.8 Scope of the Study

The study was intended to focus on the AIDS Healthcare Foundation in Ethiopia, but it will also include sites in Addis Ababa, such as health facilities and government hospitals, as well as areas where AHF Ethiopia offers technical assistance. This is because the MEAL

system is set up and cascaded to their level and they are in charge of carrying out concurrent M & E operations.

### 1.9 Limitation of the study

The study conducted was descriptive in nature, it was only limited to stating the current practice and challenges rather than exploring the different contexts, their relationship to one another and thus, fails to provide justification as to why the situation is as described. As it was a case study, generalization will not be possible. The researcher also encountered difficulties where majority of the respondents failed to complete the open ended questions.

### 1.10 Organization of the study

There were five chapters in the study. Chapter One covers the study's background, its organizational structure, the problem statement, the research questions, general and specific objectives, the study's significance, its scope, its limitations, and its organization.

The Second Chapter examines available literature on the history and evolution of Monitoring and Evaluation. It further elaborated on the existing practice of Monitoring and evaluation practice in Africa then Ethiopia and the shift from traditional Monitoring and evaluation to MEAL framework.

Research design and methodology, a description of the study area, research design, target population, sampling strategy, data collection tools and techniques, data analysis and presentation, as well as ethical considerations in the research are all included in Chapter three of the study.

Chapter Four is where collected data is analyzed, presented and interpreted.

Chapter Five includes a summary of the results, a discussion of them, a conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO: RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1. The Concept of Monitoring and Evaluation

##### Project Monitoring

The IFC defines monitoring as "the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to established standards." It helps with trend and pattern discovery, strategy adaption, and project/program management decision-making.

*"Monitoring is a routine or continuous activity that uses the systematic collection and analysis of data during the life of a project along the lines of pre-set procedures and indicators. This will finally reveal the project's success or failure"* (Kersty et al., 2013)

##### Project Evaluation

Evaluation, according to UNDP (2009), is a thorough and independent review of either finished or ongoing operations to ascertain the degree to which they are accomplishing specified goals and aiding in decision-making.

*"Evaluation is a scientific-based assessment that involves the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of a specific program to determine its merit or worth, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, to indicate whether a project is heading in the right direction in terms of achieving the intended goal, and to confirm whether the benefits generated by the project are shared among different groups."* (WHO, 2009)

## Accountability

Organizations are in charge of making sure that their operations are conducted ethically, transparently, and democratically, with input from all relevant parties and the communities they serve.

## Learning and Reflection

With the current shift to continuous improvement, there is a need to make learning and reflection a central part for learning from one's past experience, determining what is effective and what needs to be changed in order to maximize effectiveness and efficiency.

USAID (2008) eloquently describes project reviews, partner meetings and after action reviews should be in place to ensure the use of data and information generated from Monitoring and evaluation systems. This creates opportunities to learn from through evidence gathered from Monitoring and evaluation.

### 2.1.2 Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation

Gudda (2011) argues that effective monitoring and evaluation systems allow project stakeholders to reflect, analyze, propose and act on solutions. In turn, this allows the performing organization to gain knowledge, adapt, and act by modifying one's strategies or adding or removing activities in order to assure the achievement of goals. He further elaborates that such a system enables the establishment of accountability at all levels, from community to organizational to those in charge of project implementation and funding. Gudda (2011) concurs that building an effective monitoring and evaluation system allows practitioners to acknowledge and capitalize on their strengths to enhance actions that are effective while minimizing shortcomings.

### 2.1.3. Monitoring and Evaluation Practice

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Monitoring and Evaluation has become a leading agenda in developing organizational projects. It provides a potent tool that enhances the efficiency of resource usage during program implementation and the execution of development activities. The era has seen an upsurge in the need for donor-funded project outcomes (Kimweli, 2013). There is proof that an increasing endogenous need for M&E evidence, despite the fact that donor influence is substantial in the majority of the nations, albeit somewhat less so in Ethiopia. However, successful donor and in-country system integration continues to be difficult, and it is crucial to figure out how to incorporate these into a local, integrated system. (Porter, 2013)

Due to growing scarcity of donor funds and criticism of “weak accountability mechanism” and “poor institutional learning” international NGO’s are under pressure to enhance accountability as well as improve their performance. Due to this demand, international NGOs are now emphasizing the necessity to create monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that can guarantee and document increased performance. (Estrella and Gaventa, 1998).

Mebrahtu (2002) argued that there is lack of conceptual clarity of Monitoring and Evaluation among International NGO’s in terms of definition of terms as well as application of the different tools as well as their target groups. Despite this gap, Mebratu (2002) stated that is underlying consensus on the vital nature of M & E functions.

Most programs in Ethiopia were observed to devote less than this, despite the international norm calling for the M&E allocation to be 10% to 12% of the entire program cost (World Bank, 2012).

Mebrahtu (2002) revealed that the finding of M & E activities should be availed to all stakeholders as feedback systems is the means to improving quality of program design and implementation but who needs the information, how often and in what form showed ambiguity.

Additionally, there was a lack of uniformity in the programs' selection of performance indicators, which resulted in M&E systems that were confusing and nonsensical. The majority of educational projects that were put into practice may offer a review team a logical framework, but this rarely influenced the decision-making process used to advise project and program designs as well as inform policies (Huluka, 2014).

Wilson (1989) observed that hierarchical positioning had significant impact on the perception of Monitoring and Evaluation among the staff of INGO. While those who were closest to the ground focused on "upwards accountability" and consequently coined the term Monitoring and evaluation with "judgement," "control," and "external supervision," those who were the furthest removed from practice tended to adopt a more analytical approach. Many field employees were seen to feel fairly disengaged from M&E activities since they perceived them as difficult, specialized, and thus exclusive processes. How did these perceptions impact how M&E was really carried out?

#### 2.1.4 Approaches to Monitoring and Evaluation

Three approaches to Monitoring and Evaluation can be identified. These approaches differ in their principles, methods and tools. The decisions on the choice of the approaches largely depends on the nature of the project/program in questions as well as the Monitoring and evaluation objectives.

### **Result-oriented approach**

Kusek and Rist, (2004) state that "Measuring" is the key to result-oriented monitoring and evaluation: to what extent have the project's original objectives and later interventions been met? When financiers and their supporters need to or want to know what has been done with their money, this strategy is favored for creating an accountability trail for the investment in the project. The benefit of this model is that it allows project managers and participants to evaluate what works and what doesn't in certain interventions at a particular moment and, if required, make adjustments to the plan along the way. Log Frames, Logic Charts, or the more adaptable Theory of Change are planning techniques that work with this kind of M&E (Davies, 2002).

### **Constructivist approach**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue that the constructivist monitoring and evaluation approach assumes that individual steer development of novelties and societal change processes through interaction and negotiation. This fosters mutual understanding and exchange of experiences that intern lay ground for collective learning, improvement and change.

Constructivist methods place a strong emphasis on tracking and assessing the advancement of the group's learning process. They emphasize how successful social learning processes are begun and prolonged (the "how") rather than defining (the "what" question).

Constructivist methods excel because they encourage the sharing of viewpoints. They guarantee a solid understanding of how processes change. The learning process itself can benefit from these insights, and the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation can be used to improve relationships within the project or network.

## **Logical Framework Approach**

In order to establish a program or a development intervention, the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) was created in the 1960s (Naswa et al., 2015). To clarify intervention inputs, outputs, outcomes, causal links, indicators used to monitor the progress toward results, and elements that may impact the success or failure of the intervention, a participatory method is used in the approach (Naswa et al., 2015).

## **Reflexive approach**

Mierlo (2010) eloquently describe the most modern method used in M&E. This strategy focuses on the results in terms of learning and institutional change as well as a collective learning process (in groups of actors and networks). Although it has a constructivist foundation, the reflective method goes beyond. Participants in a project or network discuss their assumptions, underlying beliefs, and conventions, as well as the institutional structure in which they function, in addition to their personal opinions and motivations. They can reach a variety of agreements about potential cooperative activities in this way.

This approach's strength is that it is built on a systems-based way of thinking; current practices are challenged and a full system transformation is the goal. The strategy is therefore promising for projects that want to contribute to system innovation. (Mierlo 2010)

### **2.1 Empirical Review**

This section will focus on introducing the MEAL framework, integrating MEAL in the project cycle, the recommended steps based on organizational experiences that tried to build/adapt the framework to their organization

### 2.2.1. Shift from Traditional Monitoring and Evaluation to MEAL

There has been a substantial change in the understanding of Monitoring and Evaluation function and significance in the past few decades. This emanates from the recognition of Monitoring and evaluation by scholars, practitioners and donor across the world.

The world is ever changing due to globalization. This had led to policy adaptations to best fit the current context along with it Monitoring and evaluations requirements have increased in complexity. Pound et al. (2011) argue that monitoring and evaluation should fulfill its traditional function of gathering data on the implementation and outcomes of a program or project, but it also needs to evaluate the effects of policies, serve as a foundation for better management and decision-making, and be accountable to stakeholders.

Traditional Monitoring and Evaluation should integrate the concepts of Accountability and learning. Accountability, if upward, should focus on answering to government or the funding agency. Monitoring and evaluation is frequently required to show that contractual work has been completed in accordance with established standards or to provide information on results in relation to planned. Accountability if downward, should focus on answering the beneficiaries, the clients. A collaborative learning environment is necessary for learning because it enables stakeholders to exchange opinions, perspectives, and ideas without worrying about repercussions (Kusters et al., 2011).

Accountability and learning are two goals that should work well together. A number of donors have shifted away from evaluations that were just focused on results to evaluations that had a stronger client and user focus and a broader range of assessment objectives, such as learning, transparency, and capacity development (OECD, 2011).

### 2.2.2. MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning)

The MEAL Framework is a crucial tool for organizations to gauge the effectiveness and progress of their projects and activities. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning is referred to as MEAL. It entails a comprehensive approach to data collection, analysis and reporting.

#### **Purpose of MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning)**

The MEAL Strategy (2020) adopted by SUN Movement based on the literature review indicated that MEAL framework is a vital tool in Planning strategic and cost-effective interventions. It allows a better follow up of progress towards our strategic objectives at the organization. The continuous activities of monitoring and evaluation enables the performing organization to make improvements in areas that are lacking and adjust the program based on evidence generated to meet stakeholder expectations. This enables the performing organizations to adapt their programs to the ever changing needs and challenges of the community the serve and withstand the test of time.

The MEAL framework also helps in evaluation of the impact of the contribution of the organization that adopted the framework. Additionally it facilitates Learning through reflections by utilizing analyzed data generated for the Monitoring and evaluation activities. It allows the identification of best practice and way forward from feedback of different stakeholders. It fosters a sense of accountability to beneficiaries and other stakeholders through evidence of program impact and transparency in program implementation and management. (MEAL Strategy, 2020)

### 2.2.3. Integrating MEAL into the Project Cycle

Meal standards are organized and integrated into the four project cycle phases. The practices necessary to meet each MEAL standard are described, along with the timeline of the project lifecycle when each one applies.

During the Planning phase of the project cycle, theory of change and/or log frame is developed utilizing different sources. For instance, client feedback, data collected thus far, evidence and learning from previous projects/programs/activities. Requirements, costs and staffing for the MEAL activities are also forecasted.

During the Project initiation phase, a MEAL plan is developed to direct the collection, collection and application of the data. Data collection and management systems are established in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

During the Execution phase, Data is ethically collected using the proper procedures for disaggregation, and its integrity is then verified. To comprehend performance, make judgments, and modify programming, data is examined and displayed.

During the Project closure phase, in order to maximize learning and serve as support for previous, present, and future programming decisions, findings and the ensuing adaptations are recorded, stored, and shared.

### 2.2.4. Designing and Implementing a MEAL System

A structured strategy that takes into account the particular requirements and characteristics of the company and its programs is necessary for designing and executing a MEAL system. Organizations can follow the procedures listed below to create and implement a MEAL system:

1. Conduct a needs analysis: Prior to creating a MEAL system, it is crucial to evaluate the organizations and its programs' unique needs and priorities. This can entail identifying important stakeholders, comprehending the aims and objectives of the program, and evaluating the procedures used currently for monitoring and evaluating progress.
2. Specify program indicators: After program objectives and goals have been established, organizations must choose the key performance indicators (KPIs) that will be used to track the program's progress. KPIs should be connected to program results and impact and should be SMART (specific, quantifiable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound).
3. Create a plan for data collection: Organizations must decide what information needs to be gathered, who will gather it, and how. This could entail designing sample plans and creating data collection instruments like surveys, questionnaires, or observation forms.
4. Create a system for managing data: After data has been gathered, it has to be efficiently handled and analyzed. The creation of a database, steps for cleaning and analyzing the data, and tools for visualizing the data may all be required.
5. Create a plan for reporting MEAL data to all relevant parties, such as donors, program participants, and organizational leadership. Reports should emphasize program successes, difficulties, and areas for improvement while being tailored to the requirements and interests of each stakeholder group.

6. Make sure there is accountability: Organizations should make sure there is accountability to stakeholders by being open and honest about program outcomes and effect, as well as through incorporating stakeholders in the MEAL process.
7. Monitor and assess the MEAL system: In order to make sure that the MEAL systems are effective and efficient, they should be regularly checked and assessed. This could entail gauging the caliber of the data, reviewing the efficacy of data collection techniques, and seeing areas where the program could be improved.

#### 2.2.5. Linking the MEAL Components

Elahi (2022) in his article “Understanding monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) in development contexts” clearly articulated that the below depicted elements are crucial and complementary to one another. He indicated that each component is essential and helps the others by offering suggestions and criticism for development. Every cross-cutting MEAL component is essential to maintaining quality standards across the whole project/program cycle management process.

Elahi (2022) agrees that baseline/pre-evaluation data is helpful in the design and conceptualization of program interventions in the planning and design stage. This provides enough details to build baseline data, data collection methods, key performance indicators, theories of change, and frameworks for results.

According to the researcher, regular insights into the timely completion of interventions, staff performance, and work quality are provided by day-to-day monitoring activities using tools during activity implementations. These insights along with feedback from

stakeholder recommendations and lessons learned support quick and well-informed decision-making while in turn allow Adaptive programming

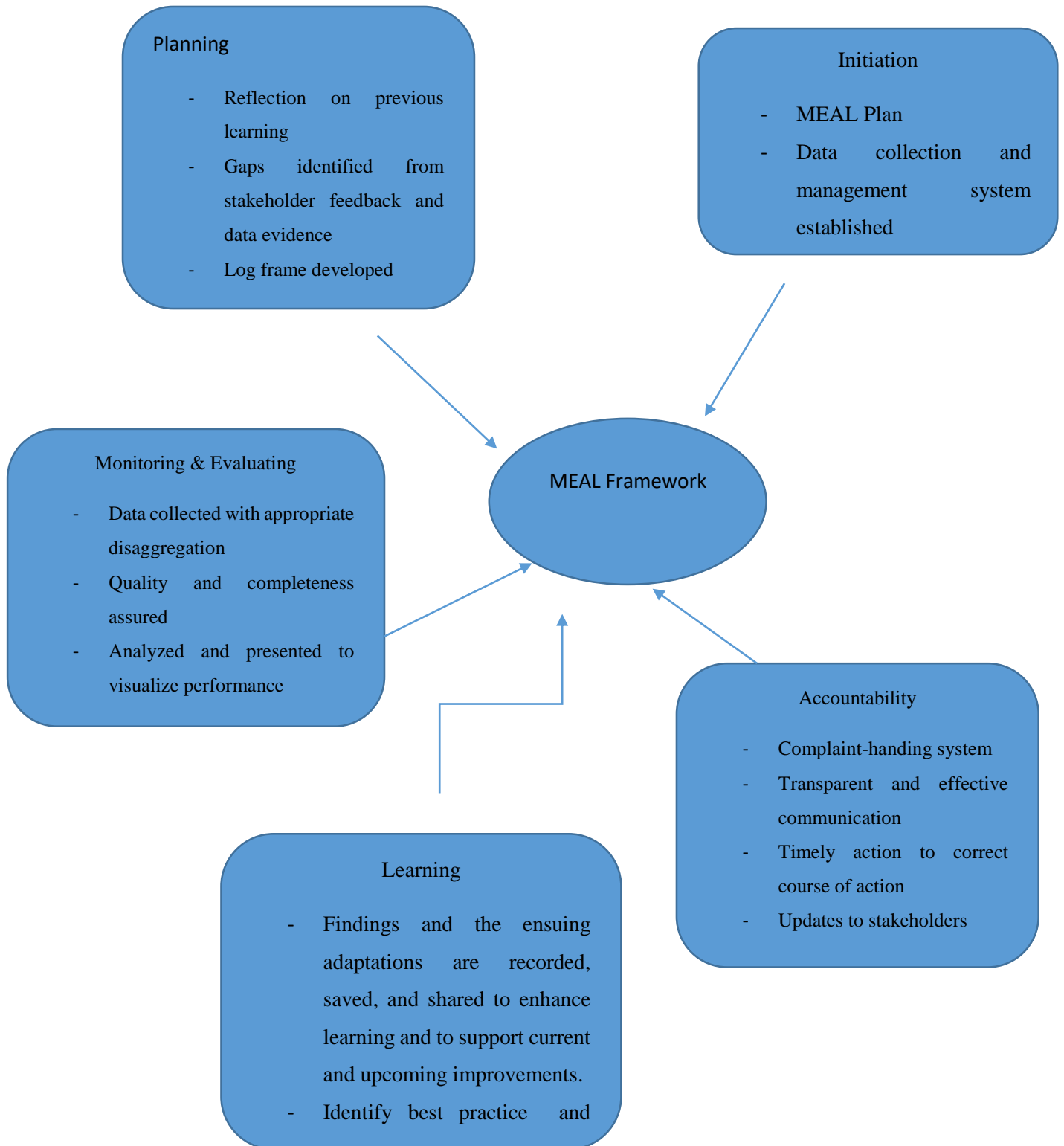
Elahi (2022) argues that accountability is a core value of organizations that utilize the MEAL system, and it must be ensured at all levels, including management, employees, donors, beneficiaries, and other relevant parties. When ethical standards and principles are not being upheld, accountability management techniques include the usage of effective complaint-handling mechanisms provide timely information for course correction, design improvements, and, if necessary, staff changes.

Learning is aided by every MEAL component. It is based on all the other parts and offers higher-level knowledge to more stakeholders regarding overall program/project improvements, future design, and strategy adjustments. Monitoring offers information, reveals gaps, and offers solutions for course adjustment. When necessary, evaluation suggests changing a strategy by bringing attention to bigger concerns, capturing lessons learned, and helping to improve programs more broadly. Accountability delivers significant elements discovered through appropriate techniques and supports adaptive programming for the future. (Elahi, 2022).

### 2.3 Components of MEAL Framework for Evaluating the Case Study

Based on the summarized concepts from the empirical review, the components of MEAL conceptual framework have been developed to allow evaluation of the case study. The MEAL framework could be seen in terms of five features. These are: Planning; monitoring; evaluating; learning and accountability. Therefore, these concepts and standards along with what it entails during its integration the project cycle will be used to assess the existing MEAL system and to respond to the research questions raised in this project work.

Figure 1 – Components of MEAL Framework



## 2.4 Challenges in MEAL

There has been many misconceptions and myths about Monitoring and Evaluation. Many researchers have tried to clarify the difficulties faced by practitioners while conducting MEAL activities.

Muzinda (2007) indicated that one of the main obstacles to carrying out monitoring and evaluation operations is a lack of financial resources. Typically, governments, non-governmental organizations, and international development organizations do not devote enough funds to monitoring and evaluation. (Smith, 2001).

According to Gitahi K. (2015), financial resources play a crucial role in deciding the viability and future of MEAL activities. The researcher further argues that MEAL requires funding unrelated to the project or program being executed.

In support of the above claim, Huluka argues that the Article 88 of the Charities and Societies Law has drawn criticism for its 22 30/70 rule of cost allocation, which forbids non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from allocating more than 30% of their annual budget to project administration. Most local NGOs assume that this rule will force them to reduce their administrative budgets to below the 30% mark, which will also result in a reduction in their MEAL budget.

Basheka and Byamugisha (2015) claim that there are many NGOs that lack technical proficiency, M&E knowledge, and comprehension.

Zogo (2015) in his study strengthens the above claim that MEAL is perceived as a one-man show, solely the responsibility of the M & E officer. Another major issue that many NGOs are dealing with is the lack of a learning culture that would enable them to apply the

lessons from the MEAL reports. Some organizations do not adequately comprehend or pay attention to MEAL while planning projects.

Gunda (2011) stated that there is ambiguity in objectives and absence of clear key indicator as a measure of performance that pave way for MEAL activities and the learning process. The researcher further elaborates that learning aspect of MEAL needs to be acknowledged along with other functions like decision-making and accountability. It is vital that relevant lessons be acknowledged, availed and archived.

OCED (2011) articulates that pre-set indicators might not be the best approach to measure change in dynamic context and as such, proxy indicators may provide similar information which entails the need to be adaptive in designing MEAL.

PATH (2013) recognized the absence of baseline data, the budget, the limited amount of time available for evaluation, and the lack of political backing for rigorous evaluation as challenges for MEAL and provided a list of their workable, field-tested solutions. Peersman (2014) concurs that common difficulties in data gathering and analysis can be related to both inadequate technique selection and implementation. The effectiveness of MEAL in organizations can be influenced by a variety of factors.

In his study, Ermias (2007) came to the conclusion that the practices of project monitoring and evaluation are influenced by financial resources, the availability of knowledge on MEAL activities, management commitment, and participation of many stakeholders in the MEAL system.

Abomsa (2018) carried out a research on assessing factors influencing effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of health projects implemented at St. Paul's hospital millennium

medical college. The findings indicate that adequate training on monitoring and evaluation increases the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. Further the result indicates strong positive association between stakeholder involvement and effectiveness of the Monitoring and Evaluation system.

Workie (2018) assessed the Practices of monitoring and evaluation in CBE projects. The researcher found that there is lack of expertise to monitoring and evaluation practice at the organizations. Additionally, the study identified that stakeholder involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation results in increased effectiveness of the projects.

Abera (2019) conducted a study to identify and test the key factors influencing effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation system at CBE. The study found that the level of commitment of top leadership in the organization determines to a great extent the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation system for projects.

Kebede (2018) conducted a study to identify the factors affecting the effectiveness of Monitoring & Evaluation systems. The study revealed that the selection of tools and techniques to be used in Monitoring & Evaluation system determines its success or failure. Furthermore, the study also revealed that Training, technical assistance and technical skill/competency are also relevant for an effective M&E system

Dipela and Mohapi (2021) conducted a study in Ghana to assess the barriers affecting Monitoring & Evaluation of poverty alleviation projects within Waterberg district. The study identified that knowledge about the process and system of implementing monitoring and evaluation is lacking. It also revealed that that rather than utilizing findings for program

adaptations, participants conducted monitoring and evaluation simply for the sake of compliance and viewed it as a tick box exercise.

Akanbang and Abdallah (2021) conducted a study in Ghana identified that weak system for transparency and accountability, low stakeholders participation and low prioritization hinder the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation system. This concurs with Nigussie (2022) that states stakeholder participation positively affects the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation system.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHDOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology used for the research project work. It describes the research design, target population, sampling strategy, data collection tools and techniques employed in this case study.

### 3.2 Research Design

Zegeye et.al. (2009) described that we can have either descriptive, explanatory or exploratory research depending on the purpose of our study. Descriptive research aims at describing and interpreting phenomena's. To describe, contrast, categorize, examine, and interpret the entities and events that constitute the various fields of inquiry, it examines people, groups, institutions, practices, and resources.

The research intends to use a descriptive study design to conduct the study according to Creswell (2003). Lee and Ling (2008) cite the fact that this form of design places a strong emphasis on describing and elaborating certain thoughts and concepts as well as investigating the connections and differences in the critical components by examining a large sample of the population. Cooper and Schindler (2008) argue that this approach gives room for more in-depth exploration and creates an understanding of the phenomenon as it exists in real time.

Therefore, the research design for this study was descriptive, a case study strategy, which was used to describe the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practice at AHF Ethiopia and the challenges encountered during the process of implementation.

### 3.3 Research Approach

According to Burns and Grove (2001), the goal of the research design is to exert more control over the study's handling of the research problem.

In empirical research known as quantitative, the data are presented as numbers. It seeks to test an assumption that has been made in the form of a hypothesis in advance (Flick, 2009). It frequently uses sets of data that are both large in scope and representative. On the other hand, qualitative research is empirical research in which the data are not presented in a numerical format (Punch, 2005). It is interested in learning more and paying close attention to details.

Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, (mixed) approaches, were used in the study Creswell (2014) states that this is a third research approach, a continuum between qualitative and quantitative approaches that incorporates the elements from both allowing better opportunity to answer the intended research questions.

### 3.4 Population and sampling

The target population were all staff of the organization who have either direct or indirect involvement in the monitoring and evaluation practices of the organization. Census method was adopted since the target population is small and manageable. Thus, 33 staffs were participated in the questionnaire as the researcher acknowledged they would be knowledgeable about the Monitoring and Evaluation practice of the organization.

### 3.5 Data collection and techniques

In order to the get the most appropriate data, both primary and secondary sources were used in the study. The questionnaire which included both open-ended and closed-ended

questions, provided primary data. The target population of the study are found at the same organization thus the need for anonymity so questionnaires was chosen as a modality as it lets its respondents maintain their anonymity. It is also quite an effective tool to reach respondents within the given time period, relatively less costly and more convenient.

A desk review of secondary data that comprised tools and reports was conducted. The adviser was given the questionnaire to examine the objectivity of the items. The questionnaire was then rearranged and refined as needed after unclear language and vague statements were rectified.

### 3.6. Data analysis and presentation

Data analysis comprises looking at, classifying, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the available evidence to address the study's initial hypothesis (Malhotra et al., 2007). In order to give the data significance, it was organized, processed, edited, coded, tabulated, and analyzed. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data set in the form of Mean and standard deviation. It was then presented in the form of percentages, tables and pie charts once the data collection was completed using primary and secondary sources.

### 3.7. Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire's ability to measure what it was intended to measure can be referred to as validity (Kotari, 2004). In order to ensure validity of the questionnaire, close review of literature was conducted. The concepts from literature were used to develop questionnaire. This was further augmented by adoption of relevant questions from previous studies. Finally the questionnaire was forwarded to the Advisor where ambiguous and irrelevant items were removed.

Reliability defines that the results of a questionnaire are steady and reliable (Creswell, 2003). Reliability is determined by the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient, which is one of the popular criteria of reliability in quantitative studies. It is measured on a scale of 0 to 1.0, and an instrument is viewed extremely reliable if the instrument has a reliability coefficient statistic of  $\alpha > .80$ . The instrument is considered very reliable if  $\alpha > .70$ , and reliable if  $\alpha > .60$ ; when  $\alpha < .60$ , reliability is considered poor to barely reliable. The reliability of an instrument contributes to its validity, as a reliable instrument will measure what it is supposed to measure and not something else. Therefore, a result after consistent questionnaire was valid and more exact.

Thus, the Cronbach alpha value of measurement under this research proved to be good and can be concluded that the instrument consistency for the research is 87.3%. This shows that the instruments were reliable.

### 3.8. Ethical consideration

The researcher acknowledged that the ethical consideration is the most important element in the research process. Thus, the study guaranteed confidentiality and preserved anonymity of participants of the study. Informed consent was obtained prior to administration of questionnaire. The researcher followed the organization's policies, adhered to the participants' moral standards, and refrained from fabricating data or filing false reports. The researcher submitted a formal letter to the organization as a pre-requisite to conduct the intended study with the help of the academic faculty reciting the purpose of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

The study's data are shown, analyzed, interpreted, and discussed in this chapter. To analyze the data and the findings from the questionnaires and document review, descriptive statistics like frequencies and mean were used. Tables were used by the researcher to display the findings. To provide a meaningful interpretation, the percentages are rounded to the nearest values.

### 4.2 Response Rate of Respondents

Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Percentage
33	31	94

Table 1 Respondent's response rate

The overall number of samples chosen to take part in the study were 33. The respondents work for AHF-Ethiopia program activities and are involved with Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and learning either directly or indirectly.

As shown in table 4.1 above regarding response rate, thirty three questionnaires were distributed to respondents and thirty were appropriately filled and returned with the rate of ninety one percent (91%).

### 4.3 The Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

From the study, it was identified that majority (58 %) hold post graduate degree followed by first degree (40%). It could be inferred that respondents have the capacity and skill to grasp the concepts of the inquiry and provide reliable and valuable response to the questionnaire.

Sr No	Factors	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	16	53.3
		Female	15	48.4
2	Academic qualification	PhD	0	0
		MA/MSc/MD	18	58
		BA/BSc	12	38.7
		Diploma	1	3.2
3	Post	Team Leader	7	22.5
		M & E officer	1	3.3
		Data officer	1	3.3
		Data Clerk	3	10
		Health service provider	19	63.3
4	Stay with AHF	< 1 year	0	0
		1-4 years	11	36.7
		5-10 years	19	61.3
		> 10 years	1	3.3

Table 2 Respondents profile

61.3 % of the respondents had 5 -10 years and 36.7 % had 1-4 years stay in the organization. 16.6 of the respondents are part of the M & E team, 22.5 % are team leaders and 63.3% are healthcare providers. All the respondents had either direct or indirect involvement with good insight in the MEAL activity in the organization which was the criteria for the purposive sampling. It can be deduced that because of the duration of work experience within the organization, the respondents are deemed accustomed to the MEAL activities that is currently functioning in the organization.

#### 4.4 The current Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice

This section will show the findings on the existing practice during implementation of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Framework at AHF-Ethiopia.

#### 4.3.1. MEAL Awareness and the Existence of MEAL in AHF

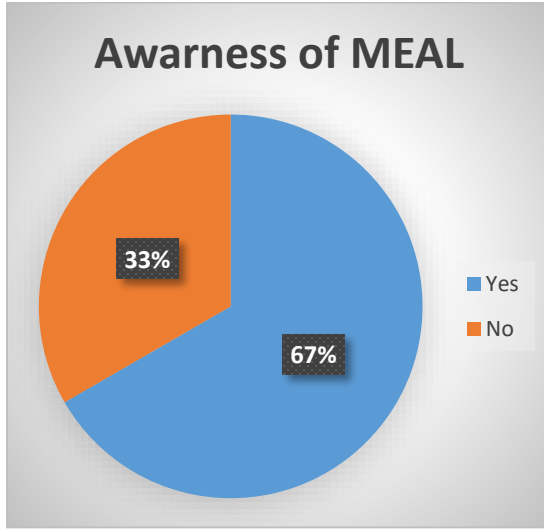


Figure 2. Awareness of MEAL Framework

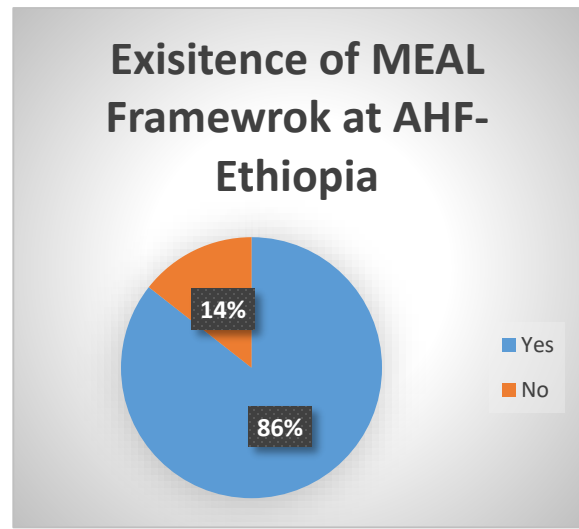


Figure 3. Existence of MEAL framework

67% of the respondents acknowledged their familiarity with the term “MEAL”. One of the team leaders articulated MEAL as follows:

*“It is a systematic approach to program management, enabling organizations to identify their strength, weakness, success, challenges and areas of improvement. It also uses data obtained through monitoring and feedback to generate evidence based program adaptations and informed decision making about program design, implementation and resource allocation.”*

Another respondent who is a healthcare provider defined MEAL as follows:

*“It is a system that allows us to follow the program by using tools to gather relevant data, correct gaps based on evidence and learn throughout the process.”*

The above depicted pie chart depicts that according to 86% of the responses, there is a MEAL framework in place at AHF Ethiopia. 14 % of the respondents stated otherwise.

According to IRC MEAL Handbook (2021), MEAL plan is a document that guides the team to help plan and manage all MEAL activities in the organization.

Out of the twenty respondents who indicated the existence of MEAL framework at AHF Ethiopia, 16 (80%) indicated that there is written MEAL framework plan/guideline that guides the overall MEAL activity, two (10%) responded that such document does not exist and two (10%) are not aware.

From the fragments of M & E activities that are guided separately in the organization, respondents stated that Need analysis (7), data to be collected (7), Individuals in charge (7), plan for distribution(4), Performance indicators to be monitored (16), frequency of monitoring (9), schedule of monitoring(5)and individuals for specific activity (9) can be identified.

#### 4.3.2. The M & E Approach and Tools

70% (21) indicated that the organization uses result based approach to its MEAL activities and 26.7% (8) stated that they are not aware. The subsequent graph shows the tools/techniques that respondents indicated the organization utilizes for its MEAL activity. As depicted in the table, 27 % of respondents confirmed that performance indicators are used, 5 % indicated formal survey, 1% indicated rapid appraisal and 2% indicated that they are not aware. This is contrary to World Bank (2012) that argued that Monitoring and evaluation owe their success to the utilization of Log frame matrices.

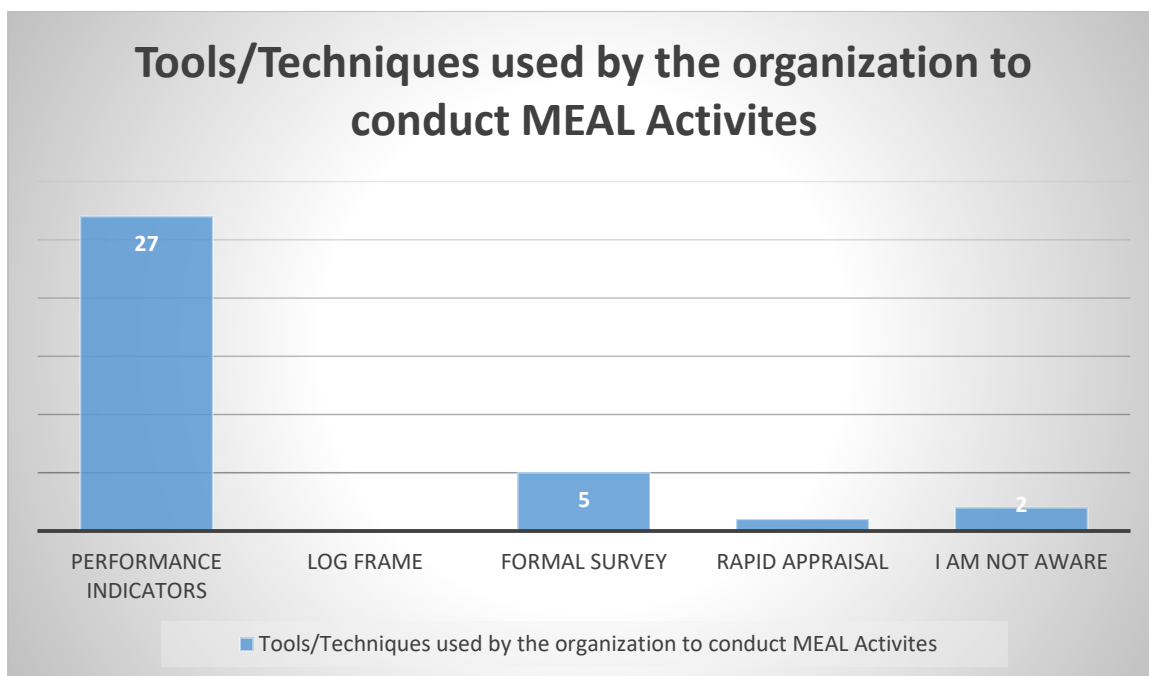


Figure 4- Tools and techniques used for MEAL activities

#### 4.3.3 Stakeholder involvement during MEAL planning

People who have an interest in the projects and programs are considered stakeholders in M&E. They are people who make decisions based on data and findings from M&E. These include the organization's beneficiaries, participating employees, management, which oversees program implementation, and the government (Davies, 1988).

Lessons from the past are what led to the trend toward participatory MEAL approaches. A sense of ownership and improved program quality were found to result from program stakeholders' involvement in MEAL design and implementation. However, the precise program stakeholders who participate in M&E vary depending on the M&E's goal and the overall institutional openness to using participatory approaches. (UNDP, 2009)

The level of ownership of the results and sustainability can both be positively impacted by participatory M&E. Working closely with important stakeholders throughout the M&E

process encourages the creation of shared knowledge and learning, aids in the transfer of skills, and builds capacity (UNDP, 2002).

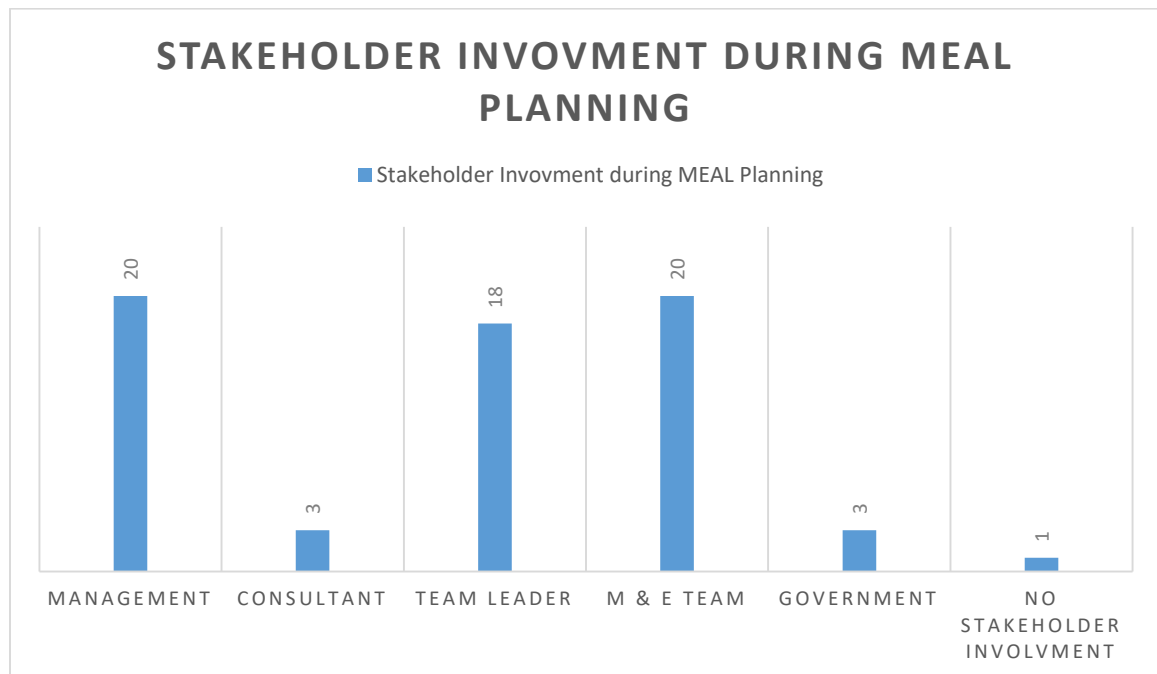


Figure 5. Stakeholder involvement during MEAL Planning

The study's findings show that there is minimal external stakeholder participation. The majority of respondents (64%) claimed they had never taken part in the planning of MEAL activities. It can be inferred that the staff has diminished input into the procedure. They merely carry out the tasks and gather information in a participant-passive capacity. The chance to include the viewpoint of the staff who are leading the implementation of the various MEAL activities is not fully utilized.

#### 4.3.4. Dissemination of MEAL findings

The dissemination of MEAL activities' findings and results allow stakeholders to fully comprehend the current situation of the program and have a sense of ownership, both of

which are necessary for the effective implementation of the various measures taken to close gaps.

According to 42% of respondents, MEAL findings and results are forwarded to the regional bureau for Africa, and according to 35% of respondents, findings are forwarded to the staff at the country office during MDAT meetings. 4% said there is no dissemination of the results at all, while 19% said there is dissemination to the government.

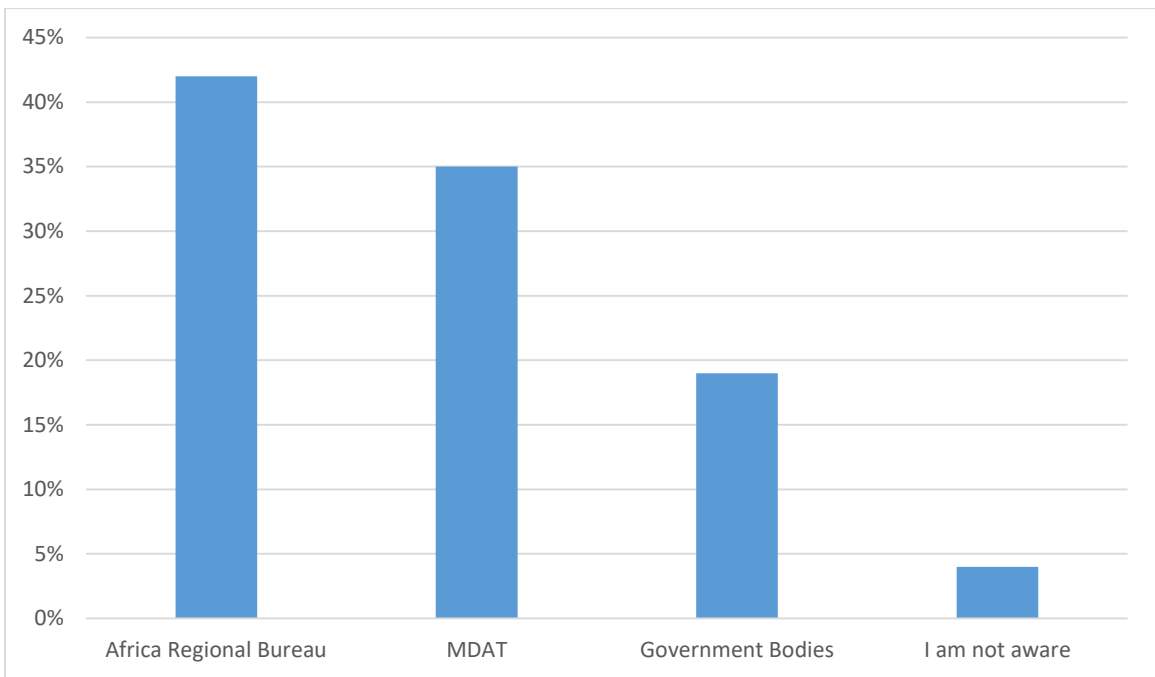


Figure 6. Dissemination of MEAL Findings

#### 4.3.5. Separate budget and extent

40% of respondents said there is in fact a separate budget for MEAL activities, 10% said there isn't, and 50% said they are unaware. However, 100% of respondents said they were unaware of the percentage of the overall country program budget that goes toward MEAL activities. It could be inferred that thought the management gives enough weight and attention to MEAL activities transparency to the staff involved is lacking.

#### 4.3.6. Routine activity, Accountability and Learning

According to 80% of the respondents, MEAL is a regular activity at the organization. Planned activities are evaluated against performance monthly, quarterly, and annually depending on the indicators to be measured. According to 24% of respondents, the organization uses MEAL findings for program adaptation, future planning, and decision-making. 16.6% of respondents said the organization's MEAL is neither effective nor efficient, and 16% expressed uncertainty.

70% of respondents claimed there is a system in place to handle complaints from beneficiaries in the form of suggestion box, Client satisfaction survey, and supportive supervision and review meetings. 70% indicated that the organization use platforms like MDAT (Multi- Disciplinary action team) and team leader meeting to discuss on gaps identified, develop PIP ( performance improvement plans) and implement as well as follow decided upon action points.

The organization's capacity for continuous improvement depends on the depth of knowledge and real-life experience it has accumulated through its prior actions and practices. In this regard, respondents were asked if the company had a tried-and-true learning system in place. 90% of respondents claimed that such a mechanism does not exist, and the remaining 10% claimed that it does but that it is subject-specific and only applicable to providers of health services.

63.3% of respondents indicated that MEAL findings should be shared and recorded to gather the most credible evidence, while 13.3% disagreed. In contrast to the claims made by 26.6% and 16.6% of the respondents, 50% of respondents stated that best practices and challenges are acknowledged.

#### 4.4 Major Challenges encountered during MEAL implementation

In this sections the possible challenges of implementing MEAL framework that are identified from literatures were forwarded to the respondents to rate based on their experience. The following table illustrates the challenges and ratings by the respondents.

Although 80% of respondents indicated in the earlier section that the organization has a written MEAL plan or policy that directs MEAL activities, 25.8% strongly disagree and 38.7% agree that this is not sufficient to provide direction to the performing team for the efficient implementation of MEAL activities.

In response to the claim that AHF Ethiopia records and archives lessons learned, 38.7% of the respondents strongly disagree and 29% of respondents disagree. On the contrary, 9.6% strongly agree and 12.9 % agree in the statement.

25.8% of respondents disagree and indicated in the narrative that the experience shared is inter-departmental rather than organizational, while 48.4% of respondents strongly agree that there is sharing and adaptation of best practice processes at AHF Ethiopia.

45.1% of the respondents strongly concur that the organization has a good feedback mechanism process.

There is a lack of consensus regarding MEAL among the available staff, according to 25.8% of respondents who agree and 32.3% who strongly agree. When MEAL activities are undertaken, there is a barrier to communication, according to 29.03% strongly agreed and 3.22% agreed.

Sr No	Item	Rating Scale					Mean	SD
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided		
1	There is sufficient MEAL information and guidelines provided to the performing team for effective implementation of MEAL activities and to assist in decision making	2	8	12	8	1	<b>3.06</b>	<b>2.68</b>
2	AHF Ethiopia captures and archives lessons learned.	3	4	9	12	3	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.44</b>
3	There is an experience sharing and adaption of best practice process at AHF Ethiopia	4	15	8	3	1	<b>3.58</b>	<b>3.18</b>
4	There is a very good feedback mechanism of best practices & processes	3	14	10	2	2	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.1</b>
5	There is lack of common understanding among the available staff about MEAL	10	11	5	1	4	<b>3.71</b>	<b>3.42</b>
6	There is lack of time and resources to conduct MEAL activities	12	8	2	2	7	<b>3.51</b>	<b>3.37</b>
7	There is barrier of communication when MEAL is practiced	9	15	3	1	3	<b>3.84</b>	<b>3.5</b>
8	Management of the organization does not give much emphasis for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning practices	3	5	9	9	5	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.48</b>
9	There is frequent training/ update with regards to MEAL practices and standards	1	6	13	9	2	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.46</b>
10	There is a lack of manpower to timely analyze and share the findings generated from MEAL activities	3	18	4	4	2	<b>3.52</b>	<b>3.15</b>

Table 3. Challenges encountered during MEAL activities

29% of respondents disagree and 29% of respondents agree that MEAL activities are prioritized by the organization's management. However, 16% disagree with the assertion while 16% and 9.7% strongly agree with it.

According to the respondents, there is no frequent training or updating of MEAL practices and standards, with 42% disagreeing and 29% strongly disagreeing.

5.8% of respondents agree, and 9.7% strongly agree, that not enough people are available to quickly analyze and disseminate the findings of MEAL activities.

### **Document Review findings**

The document review is structured so that its aim is to assess the current MEAL practice in terms of the issues raised by IRC MEAL Handbook (2021)

The organization summons a planning meeting every year to choose the areas of emphasis for the upcoming fiscal year. According to the minutes of the planning session meeting, only management, the M&E team, and team leaders are typically present. Stakeholder participation was not immediately apparent.

The organization uses performance indicators to assess progress, but there is little proof that gaps discovered through stakeholder feedback and data generated thus far have been used as input. Budgeting for MEAL activities appears to follow Ball-park estimations. A well-organized written MEAL plan is absent, as was mentioned in the earlier section.

The organization has established indicators that allow the employees to monitor the advancement of the year's initiatives. There are designated accountable parties. However, the method of data collection continues to operate as usual.

The organization makes use of a database (SMART Care, and Web portal, an online platform) to manage its data. From this, one can export and analyze the data produced. Weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports are generated based on the indicators. The systems allow capturing of data in the required disaggregation where quality and completeness are reviewed by M & E team evidenced by feedback documented.

The Africa regional Bureau receives internal distribution of the reports, while Government bodies receive external distribution. It's unclear how much each stakeholder will contribute to the MEAL process. There is no proof that the MEAL system is evaluated to guarantee its efficacy.

Beneficiaries have access to logbooks that can be used to record complaints and suggestions. A further study of the documents revealed that MDAT meetings are being held to address the concerns. However, there is no such method available for complaints made by other stakeholders.

Results from MEAL activities are recorded in both hardcopy and digital form, and they are distributed to assumed-concerned staff. However, whether such findings disseminations take the audience into account is in doubt. Furthermore, there is no evidence supporting the claim that the organization captures and archives learning from past endeavors. There is no evidence of organizations' best practices and challenges being documented and whether or not learning from such reports are used for future adaptations.

## CHAPTER FIVE – SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### 5.1 Introduction

The primary findings are summarized in this chapter before moving on to the conclusion, recommendations, and further research in accordance with the findings in the previous chapter and the study's objectives.

### 5.2 Summary

The study had 31 respondents with 94% response rate. The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents 51.6 % were male while 48.4% were female. The socio-demographic data of the participants showed that majority of the respondents (63.3%) were health service providers, followed by team leaders (20%) and the M & E team (16.3%). Therefore, the respondents were the right targets.

The study also sorted the respondents' level of education, knowledge and skills in their respective area of specialization and majority (58%) had postgraduate degree, followed by 38.7% undergraduate degree and 3.2% diploma qualifications. This implies that the respondents have the capacity and skill to undertake and comprehend MEAL activities successfully in the organization.

In regard to work experience, 60% had tenure of five to ten years, followed by 36.7% of respondents having tenure of one to four years and 3.3% having tenure of more than ten years. This indicates that majority of the respondents had ample experience in participating in the MEAL activities of the organization and are experienced enough to provide valuable responses.

The findings of the study revealed that 67% of the respondents are aware of the MEAL framework. According to Figure 1, only 87% of those 67% are aware that MEAL exists at AHF – Ethiopia. Furthermore, the organization lacks a thorough, well-organized written MEAL plan or guidance

It was also evidenced that The management, M & E team, and team leaders are often involved in the MEAL planning processes but Log frame which is advocate my may scholars for effective MEAL activities is not utilized. Furthermore, there is no evidence of stakeholder's involvement. The study also revealed that the organization employs performance indicators to implement a result-based approach.

Based on the findings, 40% of the respondents indicated the presence of a separate budget for MEAL. However, 50% reveled that they are not aware. Regardless, the precise proportion in relation to the country office operational budget lacks transparency.

The study revealed that there are several tools and techniques available to ensure accountability to beneficiaries however, such methods are underdeveloped in relation to other external stakeholders. According to 90% of the respondents, a learning platform where findings and experiences from previous as well as current undertakings are not recorded ad archived.

The challenges highlighted in relation to MEAL implementation include insufficient guidance to conduct MEAL activities, a lack of common understanding among the employees about MEAL, a lack of time and manpower, a communication gap when MEAL activities are practiced, a lack of frequent training and update and failure to capture lessons learnt.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The objective of the study was to assess the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice at AHF\_ Ethiopia. With this objective in mind, data collected from primary and secondary sources were organized and summarized. From the analysis, the following conclusions were made.

In the organization, there is a lack of a well-structured, comprehensive MEAL plan to direct the organization's MEAL efforts. MEAL planning is not inclusive, fails to utilize log frame and lacks transparency in terms of budget allocation to MEAL activities.

The study found that, despite well-developed and cascaded Monitoring and Evaluation system, Accountability to stakeholders and learning components are still in infancy.

Despite the M&E systems' designated staff and clearly defined tasks and responsibilities, the study showed that there aren't enough regular updates and trainings. The four components of the MEAL framework are not yet fully integrated because monitoring, evaluation, and accountability are routine activities in the organization, but learning is less frequently implemented.

The challenges noted for MEAL implementation include a lack of staff comprehension of the MEAL framework, a lack of time and resources, a communication gap when doing MEAL activities, and a lack of regular training and updating.

### 5.4. Recommendations

The organization uses fragments of MEAL activity guidance however, a comprehensive MEAL plan helps and guides organization in implementation of their MEAL framework.

The management of the organization should work on developing its own contextualized

comprehensive written MEAL plan with input from stakeholders and data captured thus far.

Scholars indicate that efficient and effective MEAL requires a continuous staff development and training. According to World Bank (2011), training, technical assistance and technical skill/competency are also relevant for an effective M&E system. Thus, the organization should make conscious effort to regularly update the concerned staff with regards to MEAL framework.

The well-oiled integration of the four elements of MEAL framework is crucial for its success. The Organization should reevaluate its current MEAL system and diligently work on a system that integrates the four elements. In Addition, findings from MEAL activities should be appropriately communicated to staff in order to reach a consensus about the framework and to external stakeholders in order to foster sense of ownership as well capture adequate feedback.

In addition to documenting the lessons learned, staff need to have experience sharing and feedback sessions about MEAL findings and results periodically. As indicated in the study the learning aspect is lacking. The management should build a system that allows it to become a learning organization.

### 5.5 Suggestions for Further research

The assessed the MEAL practice and challenges encountered during the implementation of MEAL activities at AIDS Healthcare Foundation Ethiopia, but still does not look into other important issues. For instance, factors that affect the effectiveness of MEAL framework. Thus other researcher can adopt other research design investigate such actors.

could be used as a starting point for additional studies to determine whether other firms have switched from the conventional M & E to embrace the MEAL framework.

This is a single case study to comprehend the phenomenon in depth. Future studies can incorporate multiple organizations to undertake possible comparative studies to assess the extent of adaptation of the MEAL framework as well as evaluate the effectiveness of their MEAL framework. Further studies could also be conducted to evaluate the relationship between adaptations of the MEAL framework with performance.

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## Annex 1: Questionnaire

Dear respondents, I, Melia Getachew, am a candidate for Masters of Art in the department of project management at Addis Ababa University, School of commerce. I am currently working on my research project work titled “Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice: The Case of AIDS Healthcare Foundation-Ethiopia” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master Degree in project Management. This self-administered questionnaire's primary objective is to collect the data required to assess the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practice and Challenges encountered at AHF Ethiopia. Your provided information will only be used for academic purposes and will be kept private. As a result, please do not hesitate to offer any pertinent information that comes to your awareness. I appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to help me with my study, and I will do the same in return.

### **Direction**

- Please do not write your name;
- Mark the appropriate box with an –X- , whenever necessary circle the number you have chosen
- If none of the options presented satisfy you, write your response in the space provided for the option “if other, please specify;
- Please provide a succinct response in an eligible handwriting in the space provided for the open-ended questions.

### **PART 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents and general background**

1. Gender:      Male      Female

2. Current academic qualification:   . Ph.D.   MA/MSc/MD    BA/BSc    Diploma

3. Your current post in the organization

M & E officer    Data clerk

Team leader      Data officer      Health service provider

4. The number of years you have been at AHF- Ethiopia

< 1 year            1-4 years            5-10 years            >10

**Part II: The current Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice**

1. Do you know about the MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) Framework?

Yes   No

2. If yes, could you please describe what it means to you?

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3. Do you know if AHF- Ethiopia has a MEAL system?

Yes   No    I am not aware

4. Does the organization have a written MEAL plan/policy/guideline/ that guides its overall Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning practice?

Yes     No     I am not aware

5. If yes, which of the following elements was mentioned in the plan that directed your organization's MEAL activities?

Conduction of need analysis/assessment       Performance indicators to be monitored

Data to be collected       Frequency of data collection

an individual or team in charge of MEAL       Schedule of MEAL activities

a strategy for sharing findings       Individuals for specific M&E tasks

6. If no, for question number 2, what is the reason behind not to have the plan?

We don't know how to design       Activities are too small

not important to us       I am not aware

Please list any additional justifications you may have that weren't offered as options but which you still believe to be relevant.

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7. What kind of Monitoring and Evaluation approach does AHF- Ethiopia use?

Theory of Change

Result- based approach

Mixed

I am not aware

8. What kind of MEAL tool/techniques or method does the firm uses?

Performance indicators/ (Performance Monitoring Chart)

Log Frame approach

Formal survey

Rapid appraisal method

I am not aware

9. Do you believe any of the following parties were engaged in the planning of the MEAL for the operations of your organization?

Management

Team leaders

Consultants

Government stakeholders

M & E Team

we do not involve any stakeholders

10. Have you ever participated in the planning of Monitoring and Evaluation activities?

Yes

No

11. To whom AHF Ethiopia distribute Monitoring and Evaluation findings?

A. No distribution    B. Report to Africa Bureau    C. Government stakeholders

C. Multi- disciplinary team meetings    D. I am not aware

12. Does the organization's monitoring and Evaluation activity has a separate budget?

Yes

No

I am not aware

13. What percentage of the total project budget is set aside for monitoring and evaluation activities, if separate funding is provided?

Less than 5%     5-10%     More than 10%     not specific     I am not aware

14. Do you think that Monitoring and evaluation activities are part of other routine activities and practices in the organization?

Yes     No     I am not aware

15. How frequently does the organization monitor and control the performance of its employees?

Every month     Every 3 month's     Every 6 months     Every 12 months     Never

16. How often do you compare planned activities schedule against actual schedule in Order to determine performance?

Monthly     quarterly     annually

17. Do you believe the organization utilizes the findings of Monitoring and Evaluation for Current program adaptation, future planning and decision making?

Yes     No     I am not aware

18. Do you believe that the organizations Monitoring and Evaluation activities are Effective and Efficient?

Yes     No     I am not aware

19. Please elaborate for both ( yes or no) response

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**Part III: Accountability**

1. Does the organization have a system in place to handle complaints from stakeholders (beneficiaries, RHB, CDC, ICAP and Bole subcity)?

Yes    No     I am not aware

2. If yes, please describe

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3. Does the organization take timely action to correct course in case of complaints or feedback from stakeholders?

Yes    No     I am not aware

4. If yes, please describe

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5. Does the organization provide regular updates to stakeholders on the progress on interventions?

Yes     No     I am not aware

6. If yes, please describe

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#### **Part IV: Learning Platform and Culture**

1. If the organization has built learning processes, what are they?

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2

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2. What kind of software or system, if any, supports learning?

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2 Are the findings to MEAL activities captured and shared to maximize evidence based learning?

Yes     No     I am not aware

3 Are best practices and challenges encountered while undertaking the MEAL activities captured and disseminated?

Yes No  I am not aware

4 Are the challenges encountered while undertaking the MEAL activities captured and disseminated?

Yes No  I am not aware

**Part V: Major Challenges encountered during MEAL implementation**

1. There is sufficient MEAL information and guidelines provided to the performing team for effective implementation of MEAL activities and to assist in decision making

strongly agree  Agree Disagree  strongly disagree  Undecided

2. AHF Ethiopia captures and archives lessons learned.

strongly agree  Agree Disagree  strongly disagree  Undecided

3. There is an experience sharing and adaption of best practice process at AHF Ethiopia

strongly agree  Agree Disagree  strongly disagree  Undecided

4. There is a very good feedback mechanism of best practices & processes

strongly agree  Agree Disagree  strongly disagree  Undecided

5 There is lack of common understanding among the available staff about MEAL

strongly agree  Agree Disagree  strongly disagree  Undecided

6. There is lack of time and resources to conduct MEAL activities

strongly agree  Agree Disagree  strongly disagree  Undecided

7 There is barrier of communication when MEAL is practiced

strongly agree     Agree     Disagree     strongly disagree     Undecided

8. Management of the organization does not give much emphasis for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning practices

strongly agree     Agree     Disagree     strongly disagree     Undecided

9. There is frequent training/ update with regards to MEAL practices and standards

strongly agree     Agree     Disagree     strongly disagree     Undecided

10. There is a lack of manpower to timely analyze and share the findings generated from MEAL activities

strongly agree     Agree     Disagree     strongly disagree     Undecided

**Lastly, if there is anything you want to add**

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Thank you for taking your time!