

Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: The Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa

by Abdulaziz Abdulalim

A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMERCE GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING MASTERS OF ARTS DEGREE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
SCHOOL OF COMMERCE
DEPARTMENT OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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MASTERS OF ARTS DEGREE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Advisor: Abdurazak Mohammed (PhD)

June, 2024

STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

I declare that the project work named " **Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa** " is my original work, and that all sources of information utilized in the work have been properly acknowledged. I did the study myself, with the assistance and feedback of my research advisor. This paper was not submitted for any degree at this university or any other.

Abdulaziz Abdulalim

STATEMENT OF CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the project titled “**Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa**” completed by Abdulaziz Abdulalim as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Project Management at Addis Ababa University School of Commerce, is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree at this or any other university.

Abdurazak Mohammed (PhD)

Research Advisor

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
SCHOOL OF COMMERCE
DEPARTMENT OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa**

by

Abdulaziz Abdulalim

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Acronyms

MEAL - Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning

M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation

PLC - Public Limited Company

PMBOK - Project Management Body of Knowledge

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

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Abstract

This study titled "Assessment of Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa" investigates the effectiveness and challenges of the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework in project management. The research employs a descriptive research design using a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Primary data was collected through questionnaires with both open and closed-ended questions, while secondary data was sourced from existing literature. The study emphasizes the critical role of MEAL practices in improving project outcomes, fostering transparency, and ensuring stakeholder accountability. Through a comprehensive case study of Upper Nile PLC, the study identifies key practices, stakeholder involvement, and the barriers that hinder effective implementation. Findings indicate that regular data collection, clear goal setting, and effective communication are essential for project success. However, challenges such as insufficient resources, inflexibility, and poorly defined metrics pose significant barriers. Recommendations for improvement include enhancing reporting and communication, standardizing data collection methods, and allocating adequate resources to support MEAL activities. The study concludes that a robust MEAL framework can significantly enhance project success by providing structured processes for continuous improvement and stakeholder engagement.

Key Words: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning, MEAL Practices

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

In the ever-changing field of project management, particularly construction, a complex mix of methods determines project success. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), a fundamental element for guaranteeing project effectiveness, is often sidelined despite its importance. This imbalance negatively affects project success, especially in construction due to its inherent complexities. The lack of attention to M&E throughout the project lifecycle can lead to cost escalations, timeline disruptions, and stakeholder dissatisfaction.

Projects with strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) components tend to stay on track and also problems are often detected earlier, which reduces the likelihood of having major cost overruns or time delays later. In the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation, it would be difficult to know whether the intended results are being achieved as planned, what corrective action may be needed to ensure delivery of the intended results (United Nations Development Programme, 2009).

Monitoring and evaluation are techniques for assessing the outcomes of a program or a project. Mostly the words are used interchangeably but the processes are not the same. Monitoring includes the process of gathering information, collecting data, monitoring progress, and tracking key performance indicators. On the other hand evaluation is process of assessing the effectiveness of a program or a project. Involving these processes makes it possible to control the good progress of the project according to the established schedule and that the human, material and financial resources are well fixed and respected. (Tewfek, 2018 citing Shboul et. al, 2008)

Most construction projects are out of scheduled time and cost. Tewfek (2018) cited Shboul et. al(2008) revealing the most important causes of delays in construction projects ranking them by three: financial difficulties facing the contractor ranked as the first most important causes, too many change order by the owner ranked as the second causes and poor scheduling and planning of the project by the consultant as third causes.

According to Chekol & Nuramo (2020), projects are carried out and managed in accordance with the organization's goals and established practices. However, lack of knowledge, economic constraints, leadership and organizational culture, misunderstanding of project management

concepts, and a lack of appropriate software were identified as emerging constraints to the development of professional project management practices in Africa.

In Ethiopia, the level of construction project management practice in terms of adapting general project management procedures, project management functions, tools, and techniques is inadequate (Ayalew, 2016). Studies further showed that many projects in third-world countries fail to be successfully completed for a variety of reasons. Among these failures are poor planning of the project implementation process and a lack of understanding of the need for project monitoring and evaluation (Callistus & Clinton, 2017).

Monitoring and evaluation is crucial as it offers unified source of data demonstrating project progress; lets actors to learn experiences from one another, enhancing expertise and knowledge; it generates reports that ensures transparency and accountability, and lets lessons more easily shared; it reveals errors and provides ways for learning and improvements; it lays foundation for questioning and testing assumptions; it enables organizations to learn from their experiences and incorporate them into policy and practice.; it enables an assessment of the critical link between implementers and beneficiaries on the ground and decision-makers; it contributes to the development and retention of institutional memory (Kabonga, 2018). It is therefore difficult to know whether the intended results are being realized as planned, what corrective action may be desirable to ensure delivery of the intended results, and whether initiatives are making positive contributions toward the successful achievement of project implementation in the absence of good monitoring and evaluation practices (United Nations Development Programme, 2009).

In the landscape of project management, the integration of robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices stands as a cornerstone for ensuring the success and sustainability of ventures across various sectors. Within this context, the application of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) frameworks emerges as a systematic approach to assess project performance, enhance accountability, and foster continuous improvement.

1.2. Statement of problem

A study by N. Seifu (2019) titled "Assessing the Causes of Time Overrun in Building and Road Construction Projects: The Case of Addis Ababa City, Ethiopia" found that only 8.25% of projects in Ethiopia are finished on their original targeted completion date (A. M. & N. Seifu, 2019). The Ribe dam in Gondar is one of such a case. At contracting to the Ethiopian Construction Works Corporation, it was planned to be completed within four years at 1.6 billion Birr. But it lasted for 10 years, costing 3.7 billion Birr (Adamu, 2022). The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project is expected to be completed by July 2017 with total budget of 80 million which takes more millions than planned with more than 10 years delay.

Biwott, Omar, and Ngeywo (2017), assert that to ensure the prudence of fund utilization they need stringent measures and this can only and will be done through embedding monitoring and evaluation to the life span of the project. Also, they stated that; to ensure the success of many projects monitoring and evaluation should be carried out correctly and at the right time and place. (Biwott, Egesah, & Ngeywo, 2017)

Callistus & Clinton (2018), study which states that weak institutional capacity, limited resources and budgetary allocations for M&E, the weak linkage between planning, budgeting, and M&E, weak demand for and utilization of M&E results, poor data quality, data gaps, and inconsistencies also the factors to carried out effective M&E of projects. (Callistus & Clinton, 2017)

Various challenges confront to apply monitoring and evaluation and program managers still face numerous practical M&E challenges like lack of enough funding & skilled staff, time or political will to support all of the M&E activities despite all of the M&E resources that are available. (PATH, 2013)

1.3. Significance of the study

This research holds significant potential to benefit various stakeholders in the construction industry. By investigating the practices of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) within Upper Nile PLC's construction projects in Addis Ababa, the study can offer valuable insights for improved project management practices. Examining how MEAL is integrated into Upper Nile PLC's projects can inform the development of practical frameworks and guidelines that optimize MEAL practices for other construction companies as well. These optimized practices can lead to improved project planning, execution, and ultimately, higher success rates.

Furthermore, the research can contribute to enhanced communication and collaboration among stakeholders involved in construction projects. Stakeholder engagement is crucial throughout the MEAL cycle, encompassing monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning. By highlighting the importance of this engagement, the study can encourage more transparent and collaborative project environments. This fosters better communication and understanding between project managers, engineers, clients, and subcontractors, leading to smoother project execution.

The case study approach allows for a deep dive into the specific context of Upper Nile PLC's projects in Addis Ababa. This in-depth exploration can reveal challenges faced in implementing MEAL practices effectively. The research can then identify these challenges and propose solutions based on the findings and best practices from other successful construction projects. By overcoming these challenges through effective MEAL implementation, construction companies can experience significant improvements in project outcomes.

The benefits extend beyond individual projects. By analyzing the effect of MEAL practices on project outcomes, the research can provide valuable feedback to Upper Nile PLC. This feedback can be used to identify areas for improvement in their project management processes and overall organizational learning. The study can serve as a springboard for Upper Nile PLC to develop a culture of continuous improvement, where lessons learned from past projects are applied to future endeavors, leading to a more efficient and successful organization.

The findings of this research will contribute to the broader body of knowledge on MEAL practices in construction project management. By sharing the findings from this case study, the research can benefit other construction companies and stakeholders seeking to improve their project success rates through effective MEAL implementation. This contribution to the construction industry knowledge base has the potential to improve project outcomes across the sector, leading to more successful construction endeavors overall.

1.4. Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices are currently in place at Upper Nile Trading PLC for project management?
2. Are there any standardized M&E tools or methodologies used by Upper Nile Trading PLC?
3. How are project stakeholders currently involved in monitoring, evaluation, and accountability at Upper Nile Trading PLC, and what role does a culture of learning from past projects play in these processes?

1.5. Objectives

A. General Objective

The primary intention of this study is to comprehensively assess the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) practices at Upper Nile Trading PLC in Addis Ababa.

B. Specific Objectives

1. Assess the current monitoring and evaluation practices at Upper Nile Trading PLC
2. Identify areas where a comprehensive MEAL framework could be beneficial
3. To explore the involvement of project stakeholders in monitoring, evaluation, and accountability processes at Upper Nile Trading PLC
4. To investigate the role of a culture of learning from past projects in the monitoring, evaluation, and accountability processes at Upper Nile Trading PLC

1.6. Scope of the study

This research assessed the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) practices within the context of Upper Nile PLC's construction projects in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The study examined how M&E is currently implemented in these projects. This includes exploring activities related to monitoring progress, conducting evaluations, ensuring accountability for resources and results, and fostering learning from project experiences. Data was collected from stakeholders involved in the projects, such as project managers and engineers. Although it was initially planned to include both clients and subcontractors in the research, it was not possible to do so. The analysis focused on how MEAL practices influence project success, measured by factors like on-time and on-budget completion, achievement of objectives, and stakeholder satisfaction.

The research excluded the specifics of engineering or construction methodologies used in the projects. It also did not provide recommendations for individual projects but offered broader insights for optimizing MEAL practices to improve project outcomes within the construction sector.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The primary limitation of this study is the smaller sample size. Initially, the plan was to collect data from 30 participants, including clients and subcontractors, to ensure a comprehensive analysis of MEAL practices in construction project success. However, due to various constraints, data was collected from only 20 participants, excluding the clients and subcontractors who were originally intended to be part of the study.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This study was divided into five major chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. The second chapter examines the relevant literature from the standpoint of experts in this field of study. Chapter three discusses the study design, data source, sample and sampling procedure, data gathering methods, and data analysis. The fourth chapter of this paper contains analyses,

presentations, and interpretations of the obtained data. The last chapter, Chapter 5, summarizes the primary results, concludes the investigation, and recommends possible corrective solutions.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

This chapter provides a study of related literature on project monitoring and evaluation, which shows studies of previous literature on definition of monitoring and evaluation; importance of project monitoring and evaluation for project success, process of project monitoring and evaluation, methods and types of project monitoring and evaluation; review of empirical studies, and conceptual framework of the study.

2.1. Theoretical frameworks of monitoring and evaluation

In comparing monitoring and evaluation definitions, it is obvious that they have distinct functions and roles to play in the life cycle of project delivery, yet complementary (Callistus & Clinton, 2017). Mostly monitoring and evaluation terms have their own differences even they are used interchangeably to indicate they are complementary processes. In reference to PMBOK Guide, monitoring and evaluation system is defined in terms of Monitoring and Controlling Processes considering similar description of their roles and functions in project management as a process of tracking, reviewing, regulating the progress to achieve performance objectives, identifying any areas in which changes to the plan are required; and initiating the corresponding changes (Project Management Institute, 2017). The integrative nature of project management for the application of its iterative processes requires the Monitoring and Controlling Processes to interact with other process groups of project management.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is the cornerstone of project functionality. It provides a systematic process for gathering information on project activities, outputs, and outcomes (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2019). This continuous assessment serves as the basis for project functioning, reorientation, and future planning. By identifying areas where the project is on track or deviating from its goals, M&E enables timely course correction and adjustments to improve project performance. Furthermore, M&E helps organizations accumulate valuable knowledge from past experiences and ongoing activities. This collected data informs future endeavors, allowing organizations to build upon successes and avoid repeating past mistakes.

Callistus & Clinton (2017) further explains the economic aspect of M&E stating monitoring and evaluation are seen in an economic sense as a study of human behavior in the process of using

resources to attain developmental goals. The combined effort of both monitoring and evaluation seek to guarantee efficiency and effective utilization of resources and processes in the project life cycle towards the achievement of successful project delivery.

2.2. Monitoring

Monitoring can be defined as the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives. (United Nations Development Programme, 2009)

IFRC (2011) defines monitoring as the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to established standards. It helps identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies and inform decisions for project/program management. (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2011)

According to the ILO (2020), monitoring is the process of continuously tracking progress to improve implementation strategy and results. It is an essential part of project implementation that helps to inform stakeholders of the progress made and the challenges faced. Monitoring is also a process to periodically collect, analyze, and use information to actively manage performance, maximize positive impacts, and minimize the risk of adverse impacts. (International Labour Organization, 2020)

2.2.1. Types of monitoring

Types of monitoring can vary based on the specific informational needs of a project or program. According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2011), monitoring can be classified into several categories.

Process monitoring, also known as activity monitoring, focuses on tracking the use of inputs and resources, as well as examining how activities and outputs are delivered (S. Joe Qin, 2003). It is typically conducted during the initial stages of a project and feeds into the evaluation of impact.

Compliance monitoring ensures adherence to donor regulations, grant requirements, contractual obligations, local laws, and ethical standards (Linh Thao Ly, 2015). It is essential for maintaining accountability and ensuring that project activities align with expected results throughout the project life cycle.

Context monitoring, often referred to as situation monitoring, tracks the overall setting in which the project operates (IFRC, 2011). It helps identify and measure risks, assumptions, and unexpected situations within the institutional, political, financial, and policy context that may affect project success.

Beneficiary monitoring, also known as Beneficiary Contact Monitoring (BCM), focuses on tracking the perceptions and experiences of direct and indirect beneficiaries (Karuti, University of Nairobi). It includes monitoring beneficiary satisfaction, complaints, and feedback mechanisms to ensure their needs are being met equitably.

Financial monitoring measures financial efficiency within a project by comparing actual expenditures to allocated budgets (IFRC, 2011). It helps project teams optimize resource utilization and ensure accountability and transparency in financial management.

Organizational monitoring tracks institutional development, communication, collaboration, sustainability, and capacity building within an organization and with its partners (Mbijiwe, 2021). It aims to enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency in project implementation.

Results monitoring gathers data to demonstrate a project's overall effects and impacts on the target population (Xue, 2013). It helps determine whether the project is achieving its intended results and identifies any unintended consequences. Result monitoring often overlaps with evaluation, providing valuable insights for project adaptation and improvement.

2.3. Evaluation

Evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision making. Evaluations, like monitoring, can apply to many things, including an activity, project, program, strategy, policy, topic, theme sector or organization. The key distinction between the two is that evaluations are done independently to provide managers and staff with an objective assessment of whether or not they are on track. They are also more rigorous in their procedures, design and methodology, and generally involve more extensive analysis. (United Nations Development Programme, 2009)

Evaluation refers to separate studies of overall evaluation judgments, importance of an intervention and it describes how is the existing things are to inform decisions and future investments and planning. (Greet Peersman, 2016)

According to Kusek & Rist evaluation goes beyond simply measuring if targets are met. It aims to understand why certain outcomes occurred and whether the project itself caused those outcomes. This is crucial for determining the project's effectiveness and efficiency. (Jody Zall Kusek & Ray C. Rist, 2004)

2.3.1. Key Characteristics of Evaluation

- **Milestone-based:** Evaluations are conducted at key points in the project's lifecycle, such as project initiation, completion of major phases, or project closure.
- **In-depth Analysis:** It goes beyond superficial data collection. Evaluations involve thorough analysis of project activities, results, and the context in which they occur.
- **Comparing Plans vs. Achievements:** It compares what was planned (targets) with what was actually achieved (outcomes). This helps identify gaps and areas for improvement.
- **Examining Processes:** It doesn't just look at results, but also analyzes the processes used to achieve those results. This helps understand if the chosen approach was effective.
- **Considering Cost-Effectiveness:** It looks at the outcomes achieved relative to the costs incurred. This helps assess if the project delivered value for money spent.
- **Assessing Overall Relevance:** It evaluates whether the project activities were relevant to the overall goals and objectives.
- **Activity Referencing:** It clearly references the specific activities implemented during the project.
- **Explaining Results:** It goes beyond reporting results, but also explains how and why those results were achieved. This helps in understanding the underlying factors at play.
- **Building Knowledge:** A good evaluation should contribute to building theories and models for future project design and implementation. It helps us learn from past experiences.
- **Attribution of Change:** Ideally, evaluation should be able to attribute the changes observed in outcomes or impact to the project itself. This strengthens the understanding of the project's causal effect.

In essence, a strong evaluation uses these characteristics to provide a comprehensive picture of the project's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. It goes beyond just reporting results and delves into the "why" behind those results. This knowledge is invaluable for improving future project design and implementation. (Jody Zall Kusek & Ray C. Rist, 2004)

2.3.2. Types of evaluation

Types of evaluation classified based on three ways (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2011):

- A. When it is done: Ex-ante evaluation, Formative evaluation, Summative, and Ex-Post evaluation.
- B. Who is doing it: External evaluation, Internal evaluation or self-assessment
- C. What methodology or technicality is used: Real-time evaluations (RTEs), Meta-evaluations, Thematic evaluations, Cluster/sector evaluations, Impact evaluations

The details are as follows: (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2011)

When it is done:

- **Before the project starts:** Ex-ante evaluations assess needs and project feasibility.
- **During the project:** Formative evaluations monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure compliance. These can include mid-term evaluations done halfway through. Summative evaluations happen at the end to assess overall achievement.
- **After the project ends:** Ex-post evaluations check the project's long-term impact and sustainability.

Who conducts them?

- **External evaluation:** Independent parties hired by donors assess the project.
- **Internal evaluation (self-assessment):** Project staff themselves evaluate the project for learning and improvement.

Methodology:

- **Real-time evaluations:** Provide immediate feedback during the project to allow for adjustments.
- **Meta-evaluations:** Assess the evaluation process itself to improve future evaluations.

- **Thematic evaluations:** Focus on a specific theme across multiple projects.
- **Cluster/sector evaluations:** Assess a group of related projects from different organizations.
- **Impact evaluations:** Look at the overall effects, intended or unintended, of a project or program.

2.3.3. Evaluation Criteria for Projects (UNDP, 2009)

According to UNDP project evaluation should incorporate the following criteria: (United Nations Development Programme, 2009)

1. **Relevance:** The validity of the Overall Goal and Project Purpose at the evaluation stage.
2. **Effectiveness:** The degree to which the Project Purpose has been achieved by the project Outputs.
3. **Efficiency:** The productivity in project implementation. The degree to which Inputs have been converted into Outputs
4. **Impact:** Positive and negative changes produced, directly or indirectly, as a result of the implementation of the project.
5. **Sustainability:** The durability of the benefits and development effects produced by the project after its completion

2.4. Importance of project monitoring and evaluation

Different researches and organizations explain how project monitoring and evaluation exercise increases the overall efficiency of project planning, management, and successful implementation by offering corrective action to the variances from the expected standard. (Pauline, 2016)

Monitoring and evaluation are powerful management tools that can help a government and state institutions improve the way tasks are performed in order to achieve a country's vision and mission. To ensure that strategic, tactical, and operational decisions are more relevant, the data and evidence that the government and state institutions require to make decisions, implement policy, and hold officials accountable should be derived from a results-based performance feedback system. (Mackay, 2007)

Monitoring and evaluation can help organization extract relevant information from past and ongoing activities that can be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation and future planning. Without effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, it would be impossible to judge if work is going in the right direction, whether progress and success can be claimed, and how future efforts might be improved. Programs and projects with strong monitoring and evaluation components tend to stay on track. Additionally, problems are often detected earlier, which reduces the likelihood of having major cost overruns or time delays later. (United Nations Development Programme, 2009)

According to (United Nations Development Programme, 2009): timely and reliable M&E provides information to:

- Support implementation of project with precise, evidence-based reporting that updates management and decision-making in order to guide and improve project performance.
- Reflect on and share experiences and lessons to contribute to organizational learning and knowledge sharing.
- Maintain accountability and compliance by demonstrating whether or not project work was completed as agreed, in compliance with established standards, and in accordance with customer requirements.
- Provide opportunities for stakeholder feedback.
- Promote and celebrate project work by outlining accomplishments and achievements, strengthening self-esteem, and enabling resource mobilization.
- Provide information to strategic management to help them set and adjust goals and strategies.
- Build the beneficiaries' and implementing staff's capacity, self-reliance, and confidence in order to effectively initiate and implement development initiatives.

2.5. Monitoring and Evaluation system

M&E of projects helps to collect the right data at the right time and for decision making process and it guide project implementations. The demand for M&E systems increases from time to time and recognized as central management functions for organizations and monitoring and

evaluation system permit the systematic and effective collection, analysis and use of M&E information for policies, practices and processes (Tiina Pasanen & Louise Shaxson, 2016).

Umhlaba (2017) shows a good monitoring and evaluation system consists of four interlinked parts (Umhlaba Development Services, 2017)

1. **Planning:** deciding and plan for monitoring and evaluation system deciding how to collect and analyze this information and document a plan and identifying information to direct the project strategy, confirm effective operations and meet external reporting requirements
2. **Implementing:** collecting and management information which comes from following outputs, outcomes and impacts are being attained and checking project operations in informal or formal approaches
3. **Participation:** It requires the participation of stockholders to be analyzed and discussed critically once information has been collected. Similarly, this may happen in structured or unstructured ways
4. **Communication:** The consequences of monitoring and evaluation need to be spoken to the people who need to and at the end the results develop the project strategy and operations from M&E both the communication processes and information

2.6. Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

Monitoring and evaluation are two separate, but interrelated strategies to collect data and report the findings on how well (or not) the policy, program, or project is performing. Monitoring is a process, collects the data about implementation, checking the progress of the plans/programs/projects, and implements certain actions if the program /projects are not performed as planned. Whereas evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives (Tiina Pasanen & Louise Shaxson, 2016).

Monitoring and Evaluation is the process of systematically collecting and analyzing information on ongoing projects and comparison of the project outcome/impact against the project intentions (Project Management Institute, 2017).

Frameworks and models are used as planning tools for monitoring and evaluation. These tools are schematic designs displaying the directional linkages between key program elements and/or planned results, and other relevant factors. The M&E frameworks assist to develop clearly understood program/project goals and measurable, long-term, short-term, and intermediate objectives (United Nations Development Programme, 2009).

- A. **The Conceptual Framework:** identifies and illustrates the relationships between all relevant systemic, organizational, individual, or other main factors that may influence program/project operation and the successful achievement of program or project goals. The Conceptual Framework serves some M&E purposes such as guiding indicators identification and impact analysis, but it cannot be a basis for M&E (Ibitola Omotayo, 2017)
- B. **The Logic Model:** is similar to the Results and Logical Frameworks, but presented differently and with a wider scope as it is not limited to the results but includes a clear plan for the use of resources to meet the desired goals and objectives. An underlying assumption of logic models is that there is a linear relationship flowing from program inputs to processes/activities, which, in turn, result in outputs that ultimately lead to long-term outcomes and impact (ICF International, 2008)
- C. **The Logical Framework Approach (LFA):** is an analytical process and set of tools used to support objectives-oriented project planning and management. It provides a set of interlocking concepts which are used as part of an iterative process to aid structured and systematic analysis of a project or program idea (Miklic, 2007) The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) has the Logical Framework Matrix (Log Frame) as its output or as an actual policy document (Myrick, 2013). During implementation the Log Frame serves as a useful tool to review progress and take corrective action. The Log Frame helps to clarify objectives of any project and identify the expected causal links in the following results chain: inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and impact. It leads to the identification of performance indicators at each stage in this chain, as well as risks which might impede the attainment of the objectives (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2004) Having incorporated the M&E in the project design, the M&E framework should be developed along the following steps (Umhlaba Development Services, 2017)

Step 1: Establish the purpose and scope – Why do we need M&E and how comprehensive should it be?

Step 2: Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators – What do we need to know to monitor and evaluate the project in order to manage it well?

Step 3: Planning information gathering and organizing – how will the required information be gathered and organized?

Step 4: Planning critical reflections process and events – How will we make sense of the information gathered and use it to make improvements?

Step 5: Planning for quality communication and reporting – What, how and to whom do we want to communicate in terms of our project activities and processes?

Step 6: Planning for the necessary conditions and capacities – What is needed to ensure that the M&E system actually works?

D. A Pragmatic Approach to M&E as Logical Framework Approach clearly defined indicators and outputs contribute to a rigid time-consuming structured log frame. In practice managers resort to shortened forms of an imposed log frame, a pragmatic coping mechanism that is used when time and resources do not allow for the implementation of detailed log frames (Myrick, 2013) This Pragmatic Approach and Planning for M&E would entail measuring risk by considering two factors:

- i. Factor 1: The impact of the measure able objective under consideration.
- ii. Factor 2: The likelihood that objective will have an impact.

Essentially, a pragmatic approach to M&E could first involve evaluating risk, say using some decision-making framework and then modeling the results of the analysis by way of a two-parameter grid (of impact and likelihood) indicating low, medium or high outcomes on an X and Y axis. While practitioners will find it beneficial to measure risk as part of the M&E process, limited time and resources may cause them to further simplify the monitoring process

E. The Results Framework: A program-level planning and management tool to monitor the achievement of results and to adjust relevant programs and activities is the Results

Framework. According to the Department of Health at the District of Colombia (2011) the Results Framework Approach has a lot in common with the Logical Framework which is used on individual project basis. But a document by the (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2004) states that the logical 11 framework has a wider scope as it helps to clarify objectives of any project, program, or policy. The Results Framework approach is meant to be simple and straight forward in design and, therefore, it does not require specialized skills. It is a systemic approach to documenting the logic of a strategy and its subsequent management, monitoring and performance measurement to ensure that the intended results have been achieved.

2.7. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

The MEAL framework, standing for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning, has become a prominent approach for managing projects and programs across various sectors. This review explores the core components of MEAL, its benefits and applications, and ongoing discussions within the field. (EvalCommunity, 2023)

Core Components of MEAL

The MEAL framework emphasizes a cyclical and integrated approach to project management, encompassing four key aspects: (World Vision, 2024)

Monitoring: This involves ongoing data collection to track progress towards objectives and identify areas needing adjustment. (World Vision, 2024)

Monitoring refers to the systematic collection and analysis of data throughout the project lifecycle to track progress, identify challenges, and assess performance against predetermined indicators and targets. Effective monitoring provides project managers and stakeholders with real-time information to make informed decisions, adjust strategies, and allocate resources more efficiently. (World Vision, 2024)

Evaluation: This focuses on assessing the project's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact, providing a deeper understanding of its outcomes.

Evaluation involves the systematic assessment of the project's outcomes, impacts, and overall effectiveness against its intended goals and objectives. Evaluation methods may include qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and statistical analysis. Patton (2011) emphasizes the importance of rigorous evaluation methodologies to determine the extent to which project objectives have been achieved and to identify lessons learned for future programming (Patton, 2011).

Accountability: It ensures responsible use of resources and transparent communication of results to stakeholders.

Accountability within the MEAL framework pertains to the responsibility of project stakeholders to answer for their actions, decisions, and use of resources. This includes ensuring transparency, integrity, and adherence to ethical standards in project implementation and reporting. According to OECD (2002), promoting accountability fosters trust among stakeholders, enhances project legitimacy, and strengthens the accountability of aid organizations to beneficiaries and donors (OECD, 2002).

Learning: The framework encourages continuous learning from monitoring and evaluation data to improve future interventions.

Learning involves the continuous process of reflection, adaptation, and knowledge generation throughout the project cycle. It emphasizes capturing and sharing lessons learned best practices, and innovative approaches to improve project effectiveness and sustainability. Ben Ramalingam & Harry Jones (2008) argue that fostering a culture of learning within organizations enables practitioners to adapt to dynamic contexts, anticipate future challenges, and innovate more effectively (Ben Ramalingam & Harry Jones, 2008).

These components work together to create a comprehensive system for managing projects and programs.

2.8. The Role and Effect of the MEAL Framework in Project Management

The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework has emerged as a powerful tool for effective project management across diverse sectors (Jody Zall Kusek & Ray

C. Rist, 2004). By integrating these four components, MEAL offers numerous benefits that contribute to project success.

One of the most significant advantages of MEAL is its ability to improve decision-making throughout the project lifecycle. Through systematic data collection and analysis, MEAL provides project managers with data-driven insights (Jody Zall Kusek & Ray C. Rist, 2004). This real-time information allows for informed adjustments to project strategies and activities, ensuring projects stay on track and achieve their intended goals (Muriithi, 2003).

Furthermore, MEAL fosters enhanced transparency and accountability (Badom, 2016). Accountability within the MEAL framework ensures that all stakeholders are responsible for their roles and the project outcomes. Clear accountability mechanisms, including defined roles and responsibilities, regular reporting, and transparent communication, are vital for project success (Ebrahim, 2005). When stakeholders, including project teams and management, are held accountable, it fosters a culture of responsibility and enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the project outcomes.

By systematically tracking progress and communicating results to stakeholders, MEAL ensures that all parties involved are aware of the project's trajectory and achievements. This fosters a culture of openness and accountability, which is essential for building trust and securing continued support for the project (Idoro, 2012). One effective approach to enhance accountability is through participatory M&E, where stakeholders, including beneficiaries, are actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation processes. This approach not only ensures accountability but also enhances the relevance and sustainability of the project outcomes by incorporating diverse perspectives (Guijt, 1998).

The increased project effectiveness facilitated by MEAL is another key benefit. Continuous monitoring allows for early identification of challenges and areas for improvement (Tengan, 2016). By learning from these ongoing evaluations, project managers can adapt their approach and implement corrective measures. This iterative process of monitoring, learning, and course correction ultimately leads to improved project outcomes (Chipato, 2016).

Learning is a critical but often overlooked component of MEAL practices. It involves systematically capturing lessons learned from project implementation and using these insights to

inform future projects (Preskill & Torres, 1999). Organizations that foster a learning culture are better equipped to adapt to changing environments and improve their project management practices.

Implementing mechanisms for capturing and disseminating lessons learned, such as after-action reviews and knowledge management systems can significantly enhance organizational learning (Milway, 2011). Furthermore, continuous professional development and training programs can ensure that staff are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills in project management and MEAL practices (Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2012).

MEAL plays a crucial role in demonstrating the impact of projects, particularly when seeking future funding (OTIENO, 2000). Rigorous evaluations provide compelling evidence of the project's contribution to its stated goals. This evidence-based approach can be critical for convincing stakeholders of the project's value and securing continued financial support (Attakora-Amaniampong, 2016).

The versatility of the MEAL framework is another key strength. Its flexible nature allows for tailoring to specific project needs and contexts (Maksimović, 2014). This adaptability ensures that the MEAL system effectively serves a wide range of initiatives, from international development projects (Diallo, 2005) to public health interventions and educational programs (Uwiringiyimana, 2022).

2.9. Empirical studies

A study made by (Callistus & Clinton, 2017) on “Level of Stakeholder Engagement and Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation of Construction Projects” in Ghana indicates there is stakeholder engagement but the participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of public projects at the local government level was vary and this was recognized by lack of understanding, knowledge, time and involvement devoted for M & E of projects by stakeholders. The study has concluded stakeholders in monitoring and evaluations of local government project delivery have contributed to the many challenges faced in local government project delivery in Ghana because they are poorly participated. The challenges faced include bad payment schedules which results for procurement lapses, non-conformity to project specification, client's dissatisfaction, delayed project delivery, lack of health and safety compliance and corrupt

practices in the construction industry. This study encourages for participatory M & E at the local government level project delivery through stakeholder management.

A study at the London School of Economics (LSE) which reported the project management practice in Ethiopia to be second from bottom in Africa, followed only by Mozambique, motivated Ayalew et al (2016) for an Assessment on Performance and Challenges of Ethiopian Construction Industry. Their results revealed that the level of construction project management practice in terms of adapting general project management procedures, project management functions, tools and techniques to be unsatisfactory. Particularly, the level of practice in terms of safety, risk and time management was found to be very low. The amount of schedule slippage ranges between 61%-80% and that of planned costs and other variables such as risk, quality, resources utilization and safety deviates in the range 21%-40% (Ayalew, 2016).

Callistus & Clinton (2017) found out that the implementation of monitoring and evaluation in the Ghanaian construction industry was facing numerous challenges and as a result the industry was performing poorly. They identified and evaluated the barriers faced by projects in the implementation of monitoring and evaluation in the construction industry. Weak institutional capacity, limited resources and budgetary allocations for monitoring & evaluation, weak linkage between planning, budgeting and M&E, weak demand for and utilization of monitoring and evaluation results and finally, poor data quality, data gaps and inconsistencies were identified as the most significant barriers in the implementation of project M&E in construction projects (Callistus & Clinton, 2017). It was conceptualized that effectiveness strength of monitoring team, approach used by M&E team in evaluating projects, and the stage of project lifecycle will influence project success whereas management support was depicted as a mediating variable between M&E and project success.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) approaches are fundamental components of effective program management and learning in humanitarian and development contexts. Several resources provide valuable insights and guidance for practitioners seeking to strengthen MEAL systems and practices. The "Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning for Resilience: A Landscape Review" from Oxfam emphasizes the importance of integrating MEAL into resilience-building programs to promote evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management (Febles Carmona, 2018).

Similarly, the "Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Resource Pack" offers practical guidance and tools for designing and implementing MEAL systems in challenging environments characterized by fragility and conflict (Walden, 2013).

In addition, the "Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Handbook" by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) serves as a comprehensive guide for practitioners involved in MEAL activities in humanitarian and development programs (IRC, 2021). It emphasizes principles such as accountability, participation, and learning, and offers practical tools and methodologies for conducting MEAL activities.

Furthermore, the "Monitoring and Evaluation of Evolving Social Accountability Efforts in Health: A Literature Synthesis" reviews existing literature on M&E approaches for social accountability initiatives in the health sector (Ligia Paina, 2019). It highlights the importance of participatory approaches and contextual sensitivity in assessing the impact of social accountability interventions. (Ligia Paina, 2019)

Lastly, the "Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for Resilience: A Literature Synthesis" from Oxfam provides an overview of existing approaches, frameworks, and tools for MEAL in resilience-building programs (Febles Carmona, 2018). It emphasizes the complexity of resilience as a multi-dimensional concept and the importance of context-specific MEAL frameworks and participatory approaches. While these resources offer valuable insights and resources for implementing MEAL activities, there is room for further refinement and exploration of key principles and challenges in MEAL approaches.

2.10. Conceptual framework

According to Miles and Huberman (2014) the conceptual framework is a product of written or visual in the form of a narration; graph of what is to be studied as the main factor. (Matthew B. Miles, 2014) The purpose of Conceptual frameworks is to provide theoretical application of what the study wants to investigate and allow readers understand the objectives of the research and how these will be achieved (Trafford, 2007).

Conceptual Framework for MEAL Practices and Project Success

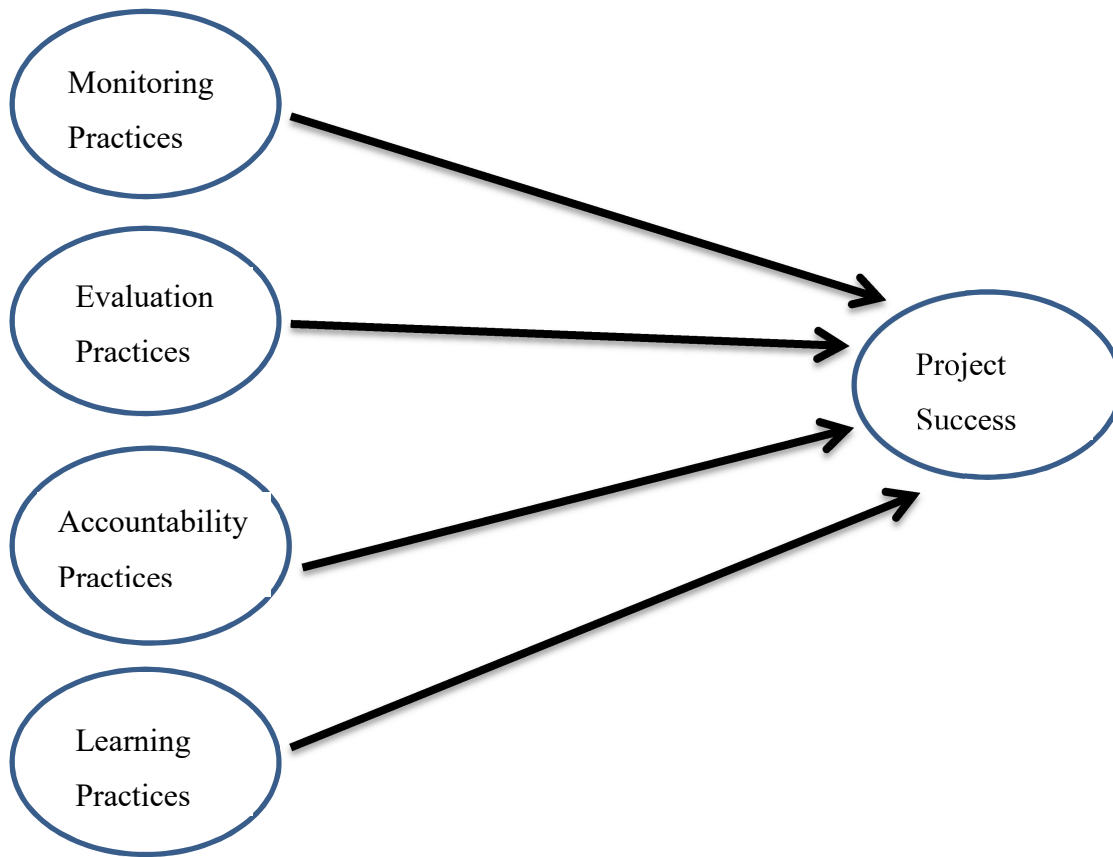


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

From the summarized concepts of the empirical review, the MEAL conceptual framework components have been designed to facilitate the evaluation of the case study. The MEAL framework comprises four key features: Monitoring Practices, Evaluation Practices, Accountability Practices, and Learning Practices. These concepts and standards will be employed to evaluate the current M&E system and address the research questions posed in this project.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the execution of the study, detailing the data collection methods, analysis, and presentation. It is crucial because it explains the rationale behind the chosen research methods, sampling techniques, data collection, and analysis procedures. Additionally, it describes the study's design, the population involved, and the research area. In essence, this chapter focuses on the research design, serving as the master plan that specifies the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing data.

3.2. Research Design

The research design is the researcher's comprehensive strategy for addressing research questions, acting as a roadmap for achieving the study's objectives.

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This paper tries to assess the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) practices at Upper Nile Trading PLC in Addis Ababa. Hence, the research design for this study was descriptive, utilizing a case study strategy to describe the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning Practices at Upper Nile Trading PLC in Addis Ababa, as well as the challenges faced during the implementation process.

The mixed methods research approach is a methodology that combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem by leveraging the strengths of both methodologies. Quantitative methods provide numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to identify trends and patterns, while qualitative methods provide in-depth insights into participants' experiences and perceptions (Scribbr, 2024 &Greenhalgh, 2006).

By integrating these two types of data, mixed methods research can provide a more nuanced understanding of the research problem. This approach is particularly useful when the research question is complex and cannot be adequately addressed by using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone. Therefore, since the research involved assessing M&E practices in

depth while also seeking to identify patterns or trends, the mixed methods approach was well-suited to the research.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques

Recognizing the limitations of using a single data collection method, this study utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This combined approach, known as mixed methods research, aimed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

According to Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003), cited in Saunders et al. (2007), using multiple data collection methods offers significant advantages. First, it allows researchers to address research questions from various angles, leading to a more comprehensive understanding. Second, it strengthens the trustworthiness of findings through triangulation, a process where different methods corroborate or challenge each other's results.

3.4. Source of Data

Primary and secondary data were used to answer the study questions. Currie (2005) underlines the need of combining various methodologies in a single research to triangulate the outcomes of each approach. Relying entirely on one approach might have a detrimental influence on the reliability and validity of the data, as well as the conclusions and suggestions.

3.4.1. Secondary Data

This study utilized secondary data, which is information already collected and accessible from various sources like textbooks, journals, and dissertations. While valuable for background information and context, secondary data serves as a complement to the primary data collected directly by the researcher. This combined approach ensures a more robust foundation for drawing conclusions and making recommendations, as relying solely on secondary data might not provide enough depth or specificity.

3.4.2. Primary Data

The choice to collect primary data hinges on the research type. Practical studies often rely more heavily on primary information than theoretical ones. Primary research becomes necessary when existing published sources lack the specific data you need (Currie, 2005).

Primary data is information gathered specifically for your research question using tailored methods. This fresh data adds valuable new knowledge to the existing pool (Hox & Boeijs, 2005). In this study, primary data will be collected through questionnaires and open ended questions.

3.5. Research Instruments

Primary data was collected using questionnaires, which consist of a series of questions designed to gather information from respondents about the research topic. These questionnaires were distributed to the selected sample. They are effective in eliciting employees' opinions on the issue under study and provide the researcher with insights into their perceptions of the problem. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions enabled participants to freely express their opinions, views, beliefs, and other relevant information.

3.6. Validity and Reliability of the Study

Reliability refers to an instrument's stability, consistency, or dependability. A dependable instrument measures properly and represents the genuine score of the variables under investigation. Validity refers to how well an instrument measures what it is designed to measure; consequently, an unreliable instrument cannot be valid. (Polit & Hungler, 1999).

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, an extensive literature review was conducted. Concepts from the literature were utilized to develop the questionnaire, which was further enhanced by incorporating relevant questions from previous studies. The final version of the questionnaire was reviewed by the advisor, who helped remove any ambiguous or irrelevant items.

The reliability of the Likert scale questionnaire items was assessed using the Cronbach-Alpha test with SPSS software. The questionnaire items covered areas such as Planning for Monitoring and Evaluation, Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation, Accountability Practices, and Learning Practices. Reliability tests for these elements yielded Cronbach-Alpha scores of 0.718, 0.915, 0.832, and 0.745 respectively. These scores indicate good internal consistency among the items, confirming their reliability and acceptability. To ensure validity, the researcher utilized

various literature sources for both the questionnaire and interview questions, developing the instruments after a thorough review of the relevant research literature.

3.7. Area of the Study

The study focused on a construction project at one of Upper Nile Trading PLC site which is located at Wesen, Addis Ababa. The project under consideration is a mixed-use building with two basements, a ground floor, and fifteen additional floors, spanning an area of 2500 square meters. This site was chosen based on the fact that it is at a stage in construction that allows for effective evaluation of MEAL practices.

Upper Nile trading plc, is a private limited company which started at 2008 E.C by 16 Ethiopian investors aiming to join and step-up different target industries some of these industries are construction, agriculture, import export and etc.

3.8. Population of the Study

A research population is the entire group of people or objects that are of interest to the researcher. Upper Nile Trading PLC was undertaking two building in Addis Ababa. The project team members who were contributing to the project monitoring were engineers with varying roles (Construction, Contract, Planning, etc.), general managers, project manager, construction engineers, planning engineers, office engineers, site engineers, contract engineers, consultant engineers and store keepers.

3.9. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The sampling method was census since the target population and the sample size are the same as the staff involved on M&E. The data was planned to be collected from 30 participants. However due to constraints data was collected from 20 staff members that are participant on M&E activities. The project team includes two Project Managers, one Project Coordinator, two Construction Engineers, two Quantity Surveyors, one Architect, two Office Engineers, one Contract Engineer, one Sanitary Engineer, one Electrical Engineer, four Site Engineers, one Surveyor, and two Foremen. Therefore, as the population of the study is small, a census is the most accurate data collection method.

3.10. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is the methodical arrangement and synthesis of research data; it also includes categorizing, organizing, altering, and summarizing the data and explaining it in relevant words (Brink, 1996).

The quantitative data from the closed ended questions were coded and entered to SPSS software so as to analyze and summarize the data descriptively using mean, standard deviations, percentages and frequency. While the qualitative data from the open ended questions were analyzed thematically.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all survey participants before data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by protecting the identities of participants and organizations in all research reports and publications. Ethical approval was sought from the relevant institutional review board before commencing the research.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter shows the results of data collected from respondents by questionnaire. The findings are reported using descriptive statistics. The data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 26.00. The data on the assessment of MEAL practices is shown below.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Respondents Profile

The questionnaire used the Likert scale, with 1 representing strongly agree, 2 representing agree, 3 representing neutral, 4 representing disagree, and 5 representing strongly disagree. All 20 surveys issued to project team members were filled out and collected. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the questionnaires obtained. The gathered surveys were analyzed using SPSS version 26.00, displaying frequency and percentages. To gain a better grasp of the issue, open ended questions were employed on the questionnaire. The questionnaire is included in the research paper's appendix section.

4.3. Characteristics of the Respondents

Respondent characteristics include their educational level, overall work experience, and current job title. The replies of the respondents and their implications are shown below.

Education and Experience				
		Value	Count	Percent
Education	1	Diploma /Advanced	2	10.0%
	2	Degree	14	70.0%
	3	Masters	4	20.0%
	4	Other	0	0.0%
Experience	1	1-5 years	11	55.0%
	2	6-10 years	9	45.0%
	3	≥11 years	0	0.0%

Table 1: Education and Experience

Among the 20 respondents that are part of the project 70% have their first degree and 10% diploma, which means only 20% people have their masters. In terms of working experience, 55% of the team members have an experience of 1-5 years while 45% have an experience of 6-10 years.

The data indicates that most respondents (70%) have an undergraduate degree, with a smaller portion (20%) having a master's degree, and very few (10%) holding a diploma or advanced diploma. Regarding experience, the majority (55%) have 1-5 years of experience, followed closely by those with 6-10 years of experience (45%), and no respondents with more than 10 years of experience. This suggests that the sample is primarily composed of relatively new professionals, with a strong educational background predominantly at the undergraduate level.

Position		Value	Count	Percent
Position	Architect		1	5.0%
	Construction Engineer		2	10.0%
	Contract Engineer		1	5.0%
	Electrical Engineer		1	5.0%
	Forman		2	10.0%
	Office Engineer		2	10.0%
	Project coordinator		1	5.0%
	Project Manager		2	10.0%
	Quantity Surveyor		2	10.0%
	Sanitary Engineer		1	5.0%
	Site Engineer		4	20.0%
	Surveyor		1	5.0%

Table 2: Position

The respondents hold a variety of positions, indicating a diverse sample in terms of professional roles within the construction industry. The highest representation is of site engineers, constituting 20% of the sample, suggesting a significant focus on site management and operations.

Roles such as construction engineer, foreman, office engineer, project manager, and quantity surveyor, each make up 10% of the sample, while several positions, such as architect, contract engineer, electrical engineer, project coordinator, sanitary engineer, and surveyor, each account for 5% of the sample.

4.4. Monitoring and Evaluation Practices

This part of the questionnaire consists of two sections that examine the planning for monitoring and evaluation and the challenges of monitoring and evaluation. It is described under two tables.

Planning for Monitoring and Evaluation						
Item		Value	Count	Percent	Mean	SD
Indicators to be measured were noted in the planning document and communicated with all team members and stakeholders	1	Strongly Agree	7	35.0%	2.10	1.071
	2	Agree	7	35.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	3	15.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
Acceptable levels of performance were identified, so that it is clearly understood when the project begins to get out of track	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.70	1.218
	2	Agree	10	50.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	4	20.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	2	10.0%		
Policy (guidelines, processes, templates and tools) required for proper project M&E was sufficiently available	1	Strongly Agree	5	25.0%	2.20	1.056
	2	Agree	10	50.0%		
	3	Neutral	1	5.0%		
	4	Disagree	4	20.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
Work plans were prepared ahead for the purpose of aligning M&E system with norms and standards	1	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%	2.20	.951
	2	Agree	13	65.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	1	5.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
Budgetary and resource allocations were sufficient for monitoring and evaluation practices	1	Strongly Agree	1	5.0%	2.60	.940
	2	Agree	11	55.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	5	25.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
There is a culture of documenting plan following the schedule.	1	Strongly Agree	1	5.0%	2.65	1.040
	2	Agree	11	55.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	4	20.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		

Table 3: Planning for Monitoring and Evaluation

The data provides insights into respondents' perceptions regarding various aspects of planning for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within their projects.

The analysis of the planning aspects of M&E practices at Upper Nile PLC reveals a generally moderate implementation of key planning elements. Indicators to be measured are noted and communicated with team members and stakeholders to some extent, with a mean score of 2.10 and a standard deviation of 1.071, indicating variability in practice. Acceptable performance levels, critical for tracking project progress, are moderately identified (mean 2.70, SD 1.218). Policies required for proper M&E are somewhat available (mean 2.20, SD 1.056), but this also shows inconsistency. Work plans are prepared in advance to align M&E systems with norms and standards, with a mean score of 2.20 (SD 0.951). Budget and resource allocations are moderately sufficient for M&E practices (mean 2.60, SD 0.940), and there is a moderate culture of documenting plans as per schedule (mean 2.65, SD 1.040). Therefore, while some planning elements are in place, there is a need for more consistent and comprehensive implementation to enhance M&E effectiveness.

The statistics show a moderate level of implementation for planning practices. Indicators for measurement and acceptable performance levels are identified and communicated, but not consistently across the board. The availability of policies, work plans, budget allocations, and documentation practices are present but not robust. This indicates that while some foundational planning elements exist, there is a significant need for more thorough and consistent implementation to ensure that M&E practices are fully effective and aligned with organizational goals.

Here's a detailed breakdown of each statement:

When the respondents were asked if indicators to be measured were noted in the planning document and communicated with all team members and stakeholders, a combined 70% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that indicators were clearly noted and communicated. Meanwhile, 30% are neutral or disagree, indicating some room for improvement in communication and planning processes.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) underscores the need for comprehensive M&E guidelines that support systematic monitoring and evaluation of interventions, which

include developing clear results matrices, utilizing a results monitoring framework, and ensuring accountability and learning from evaluations. (International Organization for Migration, 2021) Similarly, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) stresses the significance of defining indicators, data sources, and data collection methods in the planning stages of M&E to ensure alignment with project goals (SPREP, 2020).

For the next item which was acceptable levels of performance were identified, so that it is clearly understood when the project begins to get out of track, 60% of respondents agree or strongly agree that acceptable performance levels were identified, which is crucial for monitoring project progress. However, 30% disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting that clearer performance benchmarks are needed.

The item policy (guidelines, processes, templates, and tools) required for proper project M&E was sufficiently available, 75% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the necessary policies and tools for M&E were available. Meanwhile, 20% disagree, highlighting the need for better accessibility or implementation of these resources.

The respondents were asked if work plans were prepared ahead for the purpose of aligning M&E system with norms and standards. A strong majority (80%) agree or strongly agree that work plans were prepared ahead of time, which is crucial for alignment with norms and standards. However, 10% disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting some plans may not always be adequately prepared.

When respondents were asked if budgetary and resource allocations were sufficient for monitoring and evaluation practices, 60% agree or strongly agree, but a notable 25% disagree, indicating that resource allocation is a significant area for improvement.

The team members were asked if there is a culture of documenting plan following the schedule. 60% of respondents agree or strongly agree that there is a culture of documenting plans as scheduled. However, 25% disagree or strongly disagree, indicating a need to reinforce this practice.

Item		Value	Count	Percent
Questionnaire	0	No	18	90.0%
	1	Yes	2	10.0%
Interview	0	No	17	85.0%
	1	Yes	3	15.0%
Observation	0	No	8	40.0%
	1	Yes	12	60.0%
Case study	0	No	16	80.0%
	1	Yes	4	20.0%
Site Visit Report	0	No	3	15.0%
	1	Yes	17	85.0%
Focus group discussion	0	No	17	85.0%
	1	Yes	3	15.0%
Weekly reports	0	No	8	40.0%
	1	Yes	12	60.0%

Table 4: Tools and Techniques used to Collect Data

When asked what tools and techniques do your organization use to collect data most respondents replied observation, site visit report, and weekly reports. The high usage of observation and site visit reports suggests a hands-on approach to data collection, likely providing more immediate and practical insights into the project environment. Weekly reports indicate a structured approach to regularly capturing and documenting project progress and issues.

Item		Value	Count	Percent
Performance indicators	0	No	9	45.0%
	1	Yes	11	55.0%
Results-based Framework	0	No	8	40.0%
	1	Yes	12	60.0%
Formal Survey	0	No	17	85.0%
	1	Yes	3	15.0%
Logical Framework Approach	0	No	18	90.0%
	1	Yes	2	10.0%
Logic Model	0	No	18	90.0%
	1	Yes	2	10.0%
Rapid Appraisal Method	0	No	20	100.0%
	1	Yes	0	0.0%

Table 5: M&E Framework used in the Company

The kind of monitoring and evaluation frameworks Upper Nile trading plc. projects use are performance indicator and results-based framework. But formal survey, logical framework

approach and rapid logic model was chose by some respondents which show that there is a gap on understand framework of M&E activity implemented in the firm.

4.5. Challenges of M&E

The elements described below are the challenges faced when practicing M&E.

Item		Value	Count	Percent	Mean	SD
There is inadequate understanding of M&E in organizational level.	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.55	1.050
	2	Agree	11	55.0%		
	3	Neutral	1	5.0%		
	4	Disagree	6	30.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
Lack of time and resources to conduct M&E.	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.75	1.164
	2	Agree	9	45.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	6	30.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
Inappropriate M&E implementation strategies are applied.	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.50	1.100
	2	Agree	12	60.0%		
	3	Neutral	1	5.0%		
	4	Disagree	4	20.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
Unavailability of data gathering and analyzing tools.	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.80	1.152
	2	Agree	8	40.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	6	30.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
There is lack of competent staff/skilled staff to carry out M&E practice.	1	Strongly Agree	5	25.0%	2.45	1.276
	2	Agree	8	40.0%		
	3	Neutral	1	5.0%		
	4	Disagree	5	25.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
Difficulty in communicating the results of M&E.	1	Strongly Agree	4	20.0%	2.35	1.137
	2	Agree	10	50.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	3	15.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
Data tampering during M&E result reporting period.	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.70	1.031
	2	Agree	7	35.0%		
	3	Neutral	7	35.0%		
	4	Disagree	3	15.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		

Table 6: Challenges of M&E

The challenges faced in M&E practices at Upper Nile PLC are notably significant and varied. There is a moderate level of understanding of M&E at the organizational level (mean 2.55, SD 1.050), and a considerable lack of time and resources to conduct M&E (mean 2.75, SD 1.164). Inappropriate M&E implementation strategies are also a moderate concern (mean 2.50, SD 1.100). The unavailability of data gathering and analyzing tools is a major challenge (mean 2.80, SD 1.152), along with a lack of competent staff to carry out M&E practices (mean 2.45, SD 1.276). Communicating M&E results is moderately difficult (mean 2.35, SD 1.137), and data tampering during reporting is a notable issue (mean 2.70, SD 1.031). Addressing these challenges requires focused efforts on enhancing resources, staff competencies, data integrity, and communication strategies to improve M&E practices.

The most common response for "There is inadequate understanding of M&E in organizational level." is Agree (55.0%), which suggests a lack of clarity on the concept of M&E within the organization. Agree (45.0%) is the most common response for "Lack of time and resources to conduct M&E.", indicating that a significant portion of respondents feel that there are not enough resources allocated to M&E activities.

The most common response for "Inappropriate M&E implementation strategies are applied" is Agree (60.0%), which suggests that many respondents believe that the current M&E strategies are not appropriate.

The most common response for "Unavailability of data gathering and analyzing tools" is agree (40.0%), and the most common response for "There is lack of competent staff/skilled staff to carry out M&E practice" is also agree (40.0%), which suggests that there may be challenges in collecting and analyzing data for M&E purposes.

The most common response for "Difficulty in communicating the results of M&E" is Agree (50.0%), which suggests that there may be difficulty communicating the results of M&E to stakeholders.

Interestingly, around 45% of the respondents' response was agree or strongly agree for "Data tampering during M&E result reporting period", which suggests that there exist data tampering during reports.

4.6. Accountability Practices

The section measured perceptions on how effectively the project's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system translates into clear accountability for project performance.

Items		Value	Count	Percent	Mean	SD
When M&E results indicate project shortcomings, clear actions are taken to address them and hold individuals accountable. (AP1)	1	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%	2.45	1.050
	2	Agree	10	50.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	5	25.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
There is a well-defined chain of command that clarifies who is accountable for different project aspects based on M&E findings. (AP2)	1	Strongly Agree	6	30.0%	2.00	0.918
	2	Agree	10	50.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	2	10.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
M&E reports are readily available to relevant stakeholders who can hold project teams accountable for performance. (AP3)	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.45	0.887
	2	Agree	10	50.0%		
	3	Neutral	5	25.0%		
	4	Disagree	3	15.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
In my experience, consequences for not meeting established performance goals are consistently enforced based on M&E data. (AP4)	1	Strongly Agree	0	0.0%	2.60	0.821
	2	Agree	12	60.0%		
	3	Neutral	4	20.0%		
	4	Disagree	4	20.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
The M&E system within this project encourages a culture of ownership and individual accountability for achieving project objectives. (AP5)	1	Strongly Agree	2	10.0%	2.35	0.875
	2	Agree	12	60.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	3	15.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
Overall, the M&E practices promote a sense of responsibility and accountability for project success among team members. (AP6)	1	Strongly Agree	9	45.0%	1.85	0.933
	2	Agree	6	30.0%		
	3	Neutral	4	20.0%		
	4	Disagree	1	5.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		

Table 7: Accountability Practices

Accountability practices in M&E at Upper Nile PLC show moderate effectiveness but highlight several areas for improvement. When M&E results indicate project shortcomings, actions are moderately taken to address them (mean 2.45, SD 1.050). The chain of command for accountability is somewhat defined (mean 2.00, SD 0.918), and M&E reports are moderately

available to stakeholders (mean 2.45, SD 0.887). Consequences for not meeting performance goals are enforced to a moderate degree (mean 2.60, SD 0.821). The M&E system somewhat encourages a culture of ownership and accountability (mean 2.35, SD 0.875), but overall promotion of responsibility and accountability is lower (mean 1.85, SD 0.933). Enhancing these practices through clearer roles, better report dissemination, and a stronger culture of accountability could significantly benefit project outcomes.

While a majority (50%) of respondents agreed that actions are taken to address shortcomings identified through M&E, a significant portion (25%) disagreed. This suggests that there is room for improvement in ensuring clear and consistent actions are taken to hold individuals accountable based on M&E results.

The survey indicates a well-defined chain of command, with 80% (strongly agree and agree) reporting a clear understanding of who is accountable for different project aspects based on M&E findings. According to (Ebrahim, 2005), defined roles and responsibilities are vital for project success. This aligns with the recommendation for clearer accountability mechanisms, as a significant majority (80%) of respondents reported understanding who is accountable for different project aspects, but there's still room for improvement.

While half the respondents agreed that M&E reports are readily available, there are concerns about accessibility. 25% were neutral and 15% disagreed, suggesting that some stakeholders might not have easy access to M&E reports, hindering their ability to hold project teams accountable. Guijt, Arevalo, and Saladores (1998) highlight the importance of participatory M&E to ensure that stakeholders are well-informed and involved in the process.

Enforcing consequences based on M&E data appears to be a weak spot. Nobody strongly agreed, and 40% (disagree and strongly disagree) felt consequences aren't consistently enforced. The literature points out that holding stakeholders accountable and ensuring they face consequences for underperformance is critical for fostering a culture of responsibility (Ebrahim, 2005). This lack of consistency can undermine the effectiveness of the accountability system. There is a clear need for Upper Nile PLC to strengthen this aspect to improve the effectiveness of its M&E system.

A majority agreed (60% each for AP5 and AP2) that the M&E system encourages ownership and individual accountability for project objectives, and overall promotes a sense of responsibility (75% agree and strongly agree for AP6). This indicates a positive foundation for fostering a culture of accountability within the project team. Enhancing participatory M&E practices can help in building a stronger culture of accountability, as it encourages diverse stakeholder involvement and ensures that their perspectives are considered in decision-making (Guijt, 1998).

4.7. Learning Practices

This section describes the answers of the respondents on the learning practices.

Item		Value	Count	Percent	Mean	SD
The current M&E practice of the firm helps in improving project performance. (LP11)	1	Strongly Agree	3	15.0%	2.15	0.875
	2	Agree	13	65.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	0	0.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
Lessons learned from past projects are effectively applied to improve the outcomes of future projects (LP12)	1	Strongly Agree	9	45.0%	1.95	1.191
	2	Agree	7	35.0%		
	3	Neutral	1	5.0%		
	4	Disagree	2	10.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	1	5.0%		
M&E helps in learning from experience and in adapting necessary changes. (LP13)	1	Strongly Agree	11	55.0%	1.60	0.754
	2	Agree	6	30.0%		
	3	Neutral	3	15.0%		
	4	Disagree	0	0.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		
Monitoring and Evaluation information was used to assist in decision-making and planning (LP14)	1	Strongly Agree	8	40.0%	1.90	0.968
	2	Agree	8	40.0%		
	3	Neutral	2	10.0%		
	4	Disagree	2	10.0%		
	5	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%		

Table 8: Learning Practices

Learning practices related to M&E at Upper Nile PLC indicate areas needing substantial improvement. The current M&E practices are moderately effective in improving project performance (mean 2.15, SD 0.875), and lessons learned from past projects are less effectively applied (mean 1.95, SD 1.191). M&E helps in learning and adapting to changes to a limited extent (mean 1.60, SD 0.754). The use of M&E information in decision-making and planning is

also moderately low (mean 1.90, SD 0.968). Strengthening these learning practices by better capturing and applying lessons learned, and integrating M&E data into strategic decision-making, is essential for continuous improvement.

For the item “The current M&E practice of the firm helps in improving project performance.” 70% of the respondents agreed the M&E system contributes to improvement, but 30% were neutral or disagreed. This suggests a potential gap between the intended use of M&E for learning and its actual application.

When asked “Lessons learned from past projects are effectively applied to improve the outcomes of future projects” 80% agreed lessons learned are used, but a closer look reveals 35% only agree, not strongly agree. This could indicate a lack of consistent or thorough application of past learning. This goes with the result on the previous section (Accountability Practices) showing the gap that a clear and consistent actions taken to hold individuals accountable, and enforcing consequences based on M&E data appears to be weak. If individuals aren't held accountable for incorporating past learning, it can hinder the effectiveness of the learning process. The literature suggests that continuous professional development and training programs can help ensure that members of the staff are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills in project management and MEAL practices (Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2012). Therefore, Upper Nile PLC should focus on enhancing training programs and creating more opportunities for staff to engage with and learn from past project experiences.

For the item “M&E helps in learning from experience and in adapting necessary changes” the overwhelming support for M&E in adaptation (85% agree/strongly agree) is a positive sign. However, it's important to understand if this adaptation translates into actual changes in project execution based on lessons learned. While 80% rely on M&E data, it doesn't necessarily guarantee those decisions incorporate the insights from past projects. The literature emphasizes that fostering a learning culture involves not just capturing lessons but also effectively disseminating and applying them within the organization (Milway, 2011). Therefore, Upper Nile PLC should strengthen its knowledge management systems and encourage a more active use of training sessions to disseminate lessons learned more broadly.

The following table shows the response for the item “How are lessons-learned documented and disseminated within your company?”

How are lessons-learned documented and disseminated within your company?		Value	Count	Percent
Project completion reports	0	No	2	10.0%
	1	Yes	18	90.0%
Training sessions for staff	0	No	14	70.0%
	1	Yes	6	30.0%
Knowledge management system	0	No	15	75.0%
	1	Yes	5	25.0%

Table 9: Lessons-learned documentation

The result reveal disconnect between how lessons learned are documented and how they are disseminated within the company. The primary method for documenting lessons learned appears to be project completion reports (90% answered "Yes"). This suggests a focus on capturing lessons at the project level.

However, the dissemination methods seem less prevalent. Only 30% of respondents indicated using training sessions and just 25% use a knowledge management system. This suggests there might be limited opportunities for staff to learn from the documented lessons.

The questionnaire measured stakeholder participation in terms of how well stakeholders are informed, engaged, and their input considered throughout the project lifecycle. Overall, stakeholder participation in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at Upper Nile PLC is moderately practiced but could be significantly enhanced. Most stakeholders felt informed about project goals and the value of their contributions, with a strong majority agreeing that communication was effective. Opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback were also generally positive, with a large majority indicating that channels for feedback are available.

The sharing of M&E data and reports with stakeholders was moderately practiced, encouraging transparency and continued involvement. While many agreed that stakeholder input is considered during decision-making, a significant portion remained neutral or disagreed, suggesting room for improvement. Efforts to seek stakeholder suggestions for improving project performance were moderate, and while most felt there were clear mechanisms for raising concerns, a notable minority did not, indicating potential gaps in communication.

4.8. Content Analysis

The questionnaire included 4 open ended questions at the end. The first question was “In your own words, how would you describe the overall effectiveness of M&E practices in Upper Nile PLC's construction projects?” The responses were grouped into several themes to understand the overall sentiment and perceptions about the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices in Upper Nile PLC’s construction projects.

No.	General Positive Sentiment
1	Very effective
2	Very good not a 100% but on progress
3	It improves a successful completion of project
4	Successful
5	Effective M&E Practices or strategies are key factor for the success of our project
6	It is fairly good
7	It's effective and good mechanism if it applied with full dedication

Table 10: Overall effectiveness of M&E Practices-Positive

The majority of the responses reflect a positive sentiment towards the M&E practices. These responses indicate that respondents believe the M&E practices are generally effective, contributing to project success, and have room for improvement but are on the right track.

No.	Recognition of Achievements with Suggestions for Improvement
1	The project's objectives are achieved and its performance is measured, monitored and improved.
2	In my opinion M&E is very valuable practices should the mentioned company follow
3	It's so good and please keep going as it is
4	M&E practice in Upper Nile PLC's construction projects is being effective nowadays. However, the implementation should be improved
5	While strengths have been noted in the process so far, missing procedures should be corrected.

Table 11: Overall effectiveness of M&E Practices-Suggestions for Improvements

Several responses (8 out of 20) acknowledge the effectiveness of current M&E practices but also highlight the need for further improvements. These responses suggest that while the practices are beneficial, there are specific areas, such as implementation and procedural gaps, that need attention to enhance effectiveness.

No.	Critical Sentiment
1	It is not effective
2	It's pretty low and needs to be further studied and developed to see significant impacts
3	Currently, I would say the effectiveness of implementing M&E practices in the company is low due to lack of qualified personnel. The way forward is to bring a specialist so they can help overall activities of the company through monitoring and evaluating the work done and help to shape the company's future for the better.

Table 12: Overall effectiveness of M&E Practices-Critical Sentiment

A minority of the responses are critical of the M&E practices, indicating that they are not effective or need significant improvements. These responses highlight issues such as the lack of qualified personnel and the need for further development and study.

The next item on the open ended questions was: “Are there any specific aspects of the current M&E practices that you find particularly helpful or unhelpful? Please explain.” From 20 respondents 12 have replied for this question and the answers are tabulated as follows:

No.	Are there any specific aspects of the current M&E practices that you find particularly helpful or unhelpful? Please explain.
1	Regular data collection, involvement of stakeholders and feedbacks are some helpful aspects of M&E practices while insufficient resources and inflexibility are unhelpful M&E practices.
2	Helpful aspects of M&E: Clear goals and objectives: Well-defined project goals and objectives make it easier to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Regular data collection: Consistent data collection on costs, schedules, quality, and safety allows for informed decision-making. Performance measurement: Comparing actual performance against baselines helps

	<p>identify deviations and take corrective actions.</p> <p>Reporting and communication: Timely reports and clear communication between stakeholders ensure everyone is informed and aligned.</p> <p>Feedback and learning: Using M&E data to learn from past projects and improve future practices.</p> <p>Unhelpful aspects of M&E:</p> <p>Poorly defined metrics: Metrics that are unclear or not relevant to project goals make data collection and analysis pointless.</p> <p>Inconsistent data collection: Inconsistent data collection methods or missing data can lead to unreliable conclusions.</p> <p>Data overload: Focusing on collecting too much data without clear purposes can be overwhelming and unproductive.</p> <p>Focus on blame rather than improvement: Using M&E to assign blame for mistakes discourages open communication and hinders learning.</p> <p>Bureaucracy and paperwork: Excessive paperwork and reporting burdens can distract from the core objectives of M&E.</p>
3	Reviewing the schedule o
4	It's very helpful b/c it guide the project properly which is to finish on time and best quality for the specified projects
5	frankly speaking the current monitoring and evaluation practice is much helpful
6	M&E practice is helpful in ways that it identifies the problems that may encounter in a project.
7	Its effective solution on any project is helpful.
8	It's really helpful.
9	The practices are good but there is lack of learning activities
10	It is helpful because through M & E of any specific aspects lead a firm to control, evaluate, minimize risks, working environment ...etc.
11	Project evaluation is very important and should be continued
12	Availability of resources affected by the government so it's hard to plan that

Table 13: Helpful or Unhelpful Aspects of Current M&E Practices

The analysis shows that respondents find regular data collection, clear goals, performance measurement, reporting, communication, feedback, and guiding projects to be particularly helpful aspects of M&E practices. These elements are seen as essential for tracking progress, identifying problems, making informed decisions, and ultimately achieving project success.

On the other hand, unhelpful aspects identified include insufficient resources, inflexibility, poorly defined metrics, inconsistent data collection, data overload, a focus on blame, excessive bureaucracy, and a lack of learning activities. These factors are perceived as barriers to effective M&E practices and can hinder project performance and improvement.

The next item on the open ended question was “What suggestions would you make for improving the implementation of M&E practices within Upper Nile PLC's construction projects?”

No.	What suggestions would you make for improving the implementation of M&E practices within Upper Nile PLC's construction projects?
1	Effective reporting and communication, involvement of stakeholders, regular data collection, evaluating findings and adequate resources.
2	One of My suggestion is M&E should practice by accountability
3	There must be clear objectives and goals to achieve and enhance the implementation within the project
4	I would say in data collection.
5	In data collection
6	To improve the implementation of M&E practices, we have to pay attention to the M&E practices and work on it since it's helpful practice.
7	To improve the learning practices by documenting the project properly
8	I suggest it is better to make team or group for M & E terry. Hopefully it improves or opens way for cross check its source timing ,transparency ,acceptance clearance...etc. for any data through report, meeting, case study, observation & finally make decision according to data based, transparency , timing, in biased ...etc. As a result the out were good.
9	The evaluation process needs to be reviewed more thoroughly than before. This review

	needs to be drawn to the bottom of the structure.
10	Strong communication with government Strong Selection of skilled labor Perfect Time management

Table 14: Suggestions

Respondents suggest several key areas for improving the implementation of M&E practices within Upper Nile PLC's construction projects. The main themes include:

1. **Effective Reporting and Communication:** Emphasizing the importance of clear and timely communication among all stakeholders, including the government, to ensure everyone is informed and aligned.
2. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Highlighting the need for involving stakeholders in the M&E process to ensure comprehensive data collection and evaluation.
3. **Regular Data Collection:** Recommending consistent data collection methods to ensure reliable and actionable insights.
4. **Evaluating Findings and Adequate Resources:** Stressing the need for thorough evaluation of findings and ensuring adequate resources are available for M&E activities.
5. **Accountability:** Advocating for accountability in M&E practices to ensure individuals are responsible for their actions and the overall project success.
6. **Clear Objectives and Goals:** Suggesting the establishment of clear objectives and goals to guide M&E practices effectively.
7. **Documentation and Learning:** Encouraging proper documentation of projects to facilitate learning and continuous improvement.
8. **Team Formation for M&E:** Proposing the creation of dedicated M&E teams to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the M&E process.
9. **Thorough Evaluation Process:** Recommending a more thorough and in-depth evaluation process that considers all levels of the project structure.
10. **Skilled Labor and Time Management:** Emphasizing the importance of selecting skilled labor and ensuring effective time management to improve project outcomes.
11. **General Improvement and Focus on M&E:** Urging a general improvement and increased focus on M&E practices to maximize their benefits.

The last part of the open ended question was “Last comments, suggestions regarding M&E practices within Upper Nile Trading PLC’s construction projects?” The responses were tabulated as follows:

No.	Last comments, suggestions regarding M&E practices within Upper Nile Trading PLC’s construction projects?
1	The company should prioritize the importance of this M&E practice, ensuring that it is upheld with a strong sense of accountability and responsibility.
2	In my opinion M&E is very important manner for construction projects and with out M&E practice in one company there is no proper management and quality works
3	I would suggest the practice to be more flexible when evaluating any projects.
4	No suggestions
5	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of a project is a critical management function that involves the systematic collection, analysis, and use of information to track the progress of project implementation and to assess the overall performance and impact of the project, so we have to work on it more.
6	In my opinion it is so good but i recommend & expect more than the current M & E trends.
7	It is good but needs improvement
8	Provide external influence on M&E Like government, neighbors in construction site, environment and so

Table 15: Last Comments

The feedback on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices within Upper Nile Trading PLC's construction projects highlights several key areas for enhancement. Respondents emphasize the importance of prioritizing M&E practices, ensuring they are implemented with a strong sense of accountability and responsibility. This focus is crucial for achieving proper management and maintaining high-quality standards in construction projects. M&E is viewed as a critical management function that systematically tracks project progress, assesses overall performance, and uses information to make informed decisions, underscoring its essential role in project success.

While there is general satisfaction with the current M&E practices, respondents express a desire for continuous improvement and advancement. Recommendations include making the evaluation process more flexible to adapt to the specific needs and circumstances of different projects. Flexibility in M&E allows for more accurate and relevant assessments, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the practice. Additionally, it is suggested that documenting projects more thoroughly can improve learning practices, ensuring that valuable insights are captured and utilized for future improvements.

Furthermore, incorporating external influences such as input from government bodies, community members, and environmental considerations can enhance the comprehensiveness of M&E practices. These external perspectives can provide valuable insights and ensure that M&E processes are aligned with broader societal and regulatory expectations.

Chapter 5: Summary of Major Findings and Conclusion

5.1. Summary of the Results

The research titled " Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa " assessed the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) practices. The study's findings highlight several critical aspects of current M&E practices, stakeholder involvement, learning practices, suggestions for improvement, and the overall effect of MEAL practices on project success.

The study found that regular data collection, clear goal setting, performance measurement, effective reporting, communication, feedback, and guidance are particularly beneficial aspects of M&E practices. These elements were deemed essential for tracking progress, identifying problems, making informed decisions, and achieving project success. However, the study also identified significant challenges in current M&E practices. Insufficient resources, inflexibility, poorly defined metrics, inconsistent data collection, data overload, blame culture, excessive bureaucracy, and a lack of learning activities were cited as major barriers. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of M&E practices, affecting the overall success of projects.

The research emphasized the critical role of stakeholder involvement in the success of M&E practices. Engaging stakeholders throughout the M&E process ensures comprehensive data collection and evaluation, aligning all parties towards common objectives and fostering a collaborative environment.

Additionally, accountability within M&E practices was strongly advocated. The study highlighted the need for individuals and teams to be responsible for their actions and the outcomes of the project, promoting a culture of transparency and trust.

Proper documentation and fostering a culture of learning from past projects were identified as crucial for continuous improvement. Thorough documentation helps capture valuable insights that can be utilized to enhance future projects, ensuring that lessons learned are not lost. The study also underscored the importance of flexibility and adaptation in M&E practices. Flexibility allows for more accurate and relevant assessments that can adjust to the specific needs and circumstances of different projects, making the M&E process more responsive and effective.

Several recommendations were made to enhance M&E practices. Improving reporting and communication among all stakeholders, including government bodies, is essential to ensure everyone is informed and aligned. Regular data collection methods should be standardized to provide reliable and actionable insights. Adequate resources must be allocated to M&E activities to support their effective implementation. The formation of dedicated M&E teams can enhance effectiveness and transparency. Furthermore, selecting skilled labor and managing time efficiently were suggested to improve project outcomes. These recommendations aim to address the challenges identified and improve the overall efficacy of M&E practices.

The research concluded that a well-designed MEAL framework could significantly improve project success rates. By providing structured processes for monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning, this framework supports better project planning, execution, and completion within budget and timelines.

The findings suggest that addressing the challenges in current M&E practices and implementing the suggested improvements can lead to more successful project outcomes. A robust MEAL framework not only enhances the management of individual projects but also contributes to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

5.2. Conclusion

The research titled " Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa " describes the significant role that Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) practices play in the success of construction projects. This topic is critically important as the construction industry frequently encounters challenges in project management, which can lead to delays, budget overruns, and quality issues. Understanding how MEAL practices contribute to overcoming these challenges is essential for improving project outcomes and organizational efficiency.

The research began by asking these five questions to understand the following: Current M&E Practices at Upper Nile Trading PLC, Standardized M&E Tools or Methodologies, Stakeholder Involvement, Lack of Learning Culture, and Contribution of a Well-Designed MEAL Framework. Each question is discussed on the following paragraphs.

The study identified that Upper Nile Trading PLC has several M&E practices in place, including regular data collection, clear goal setting, performance measurement, effective reporting, communication, feedback, and guidance. These practices are essential for tracking progress, identifying problems, making informed decisions, and achieving project success.

While Upper Nile Trading PLC employs various M&E practices, the study found a lack of standardized M&E tools or methodologies. The absence of standardized tools and methodologies leads to inconsistent data collection and evaluation, which can hinder the effectiveness of the M&E process.

Stakeholder involvement is critical in the M&E process at Upper Nile Trading PLC. The study highlighted that engaging stakeholders throughout the M&E process ensures comprehensive data collection and evaluation. It aligns all parties towards common objectives and fosters a collaborative environment. However, there is room for improvement in ensuring that stakeholder feedback is consistently integrated into decision-making processes.

The lack of a culture of learning from past projects at Upper Nile Trading PLC negatively affects project success. The study emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of learning and adaptation, which allows for continuous improvement and more responsive project management. Proper documentation and thorough evaluation processes are crucial for capturing valuable insights that can be utilized to enhance future projects.

The research concluded that a well-designed MEAL framework could significantly improve project success rates. By providing structured processes for monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning, this framework supports better project planning, execution, and completion within budget and timelines. It enhances the management of individual projects and contributes to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

In light of these findings, it is imperative for construction firms, including Upper Nile PLC, to prioritize the adoption and refinement of MEAL practices. This includes allocating adequate resources, improving communication and reporting, and fostering stakeholder engagement and accountability. Additionally, forming dedicated M&E teams and selecting skilled labor can further enhance project success rates. Future research should continue to explore the effect of

MEAL practices across different sectors and contexts, providing more detailed insights and strategies for implementation.

The evidence presented in this study strongly supports the integration of MEAL practices into construction project management. By doing so, companies can achieve higher success rates, complete projects on time and within budget, and maintain high-quality standards. The construction industry stands to benefit greatly from a comprehensive MEAL approach, ultimately leading to more efficient, effective and sustainable project outcomes.

5.3.Recommendations

Upper Nile Trading PLC should prioritize developing and implementing standardized M&E tools and methodologies to ensure consistency and effectiveness in monitoring and evaluation. The current lack of standardized tools leads to inconsistent data collection and evaluation, which hinders decision-making. The M&E team and project managers should create standardized templates, guidelines, and procedures within the next six months. This will enhance the reliability of M&E data, improve tracking of project progress, and identify areas needing improvement.

Improving stakeholder engagement is crucial for effective M&E practices. Upper Nile Trading PLC should establish structured processes to ensure stakeholders are regularly informed about project goals and progress, and their feedback is integrated into decision-making. Project managers and the M&E team should organize regular meetings, surveys, and feedback sessions to gather input from stakeholders. Immediate implementation and continuous refinement over the next year will align stakeholders towards common objectives, improve transparency, and increase their investment in project outcomes.

Adequate budget and resources for M&E activities are essential for their effectiveness. The study found that resource allocation for M&E is often insufficient, limiting thorough monitoring and evaluation. Senior management and financial planners should review and adjust the budget in the next cycle to ensure sufficient resources for M&E activities, including necessary tools, skilled personnel, and training programs. Ensuring well-funded M&E activities will enhance the quality and depth of evaluations, leading to more accurate insights and better-informed decision-making.

Upper Nile Trading PLC should work towards establishing a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This involves documenting lessons learned from past projects and integrating these insights into future project planning and execution. Senior management, project managers, and the HR department should collaborate to develop training programs and workshops that emphasize the importance of learning from past experiences. Over the next 1-2 years, fostering this culture will enable the organization to adapt more effectively, continuously improve processes, and enhance overall project success rates.

Building the capacity of staff to effectively conduct M&E is essential for long-term success. Upper Nile Trading PLC should invest in training and development programs to enhance the M&E skills of its employees. The HR department, in collaboration with external training providers, should design and implement these programs over the next 1-3 years. By equipping staff with the necessary skills and knowledge, the company can ensure more accurate and effective monitoring and evaluation, leading to better project outcomes and overall organizational efficiency.

Designing and implementing a comprehensive MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) framework is crucial for improving project success rates. This framework should integrate all aspects of M&E, fostering accountability and continuous learning. Senior management and M&E specialists should work together to develop and roll out this framework within the next 2-3 years. A well-structured MEAL framework will provide a solid foundation for better project planning, execution, and evaluation, ultimately leading to higher success rates, better resource utilization, and enhanced organizational performance.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa

Questionnaire

Note of Permission:

Dear Sir/Madam I respectfully ask that you help answer this questionnaire. Your response is highly valuable and contributory to the outcome of the research titled “**Assessment of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Practices: A Case Study of Upper Nile PLC in Addis Ababa**”. All information provided shall at utmost be kept confidentially and utilized for academic purpose only. Thank you.

Instructions:

- Do not write your name.
- Please read the questions carefully and provide an appropriate response.
- Please tick (√) your answers and fill spaces provided where necessary.

Contact of researcher:

Name: Abdulaziz Abdulalim

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The questionnaire consists of four parts:

Part I. Demographic data: Questions 1 to 4

Part II. Monitoring and Evaluation Practices

Part III. Accountability Practices

Part IV. Learning Practices

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

With sincere respect,

Direction: Please use a tick (√) mark to answer the following statements as SA = (Strongly Agree). A = (Agree), N = (Neutral), D = (Disagree) and SD = (Strongly Disagree) to rate the factors

Part I: Demographic Data

1. Your age: ≤ 30 years 31 – 40 years ≥ 40 years **(age)**
2. Your level of education: Diploma /Advanced/ Degree Masters Other (Please specify): _____ **(education)**
3. Your position in the project/organization (please specify) _____: **(position)**
4. Your experience in project related jobs in construction and other projects, if any:
 1-5 years 6-10 years ≥11 years **(experience)**

Part II: Monitoring and Evaluation Practices

Section 1: PLANNING FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION: (PME)

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement listed below. **(PME1)**

No.	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Indicators to be measured were noted in the planning document and communicated with all team members and stakeholders (PME11)					
2	Acceptable levels of performance were identified, so that it is clearly understood when the project begins to get out of track (PME12)					
3	Policy (guidelines, processes, templates and tools) required for proper project M&E was sufficiently available (PME13)					
4	Work plans were prepared ahead for the purpose of aligning M&E system with norms and standards (PME14)					
5	Budgetary and resource allocations were sufficient for monitoring and evaluation practices (PME15)					
6	There is a culture of documenting plan following the schedule. (PME16)					

2. What tools and techniques does your organization use to collect data? (You can select more than one if it uses more than one technique) **(PME2)**

- Questionnaire **(PME21)** Site Visit Report**(PME25)**
 Interview**(PME22)** Focus group discussion**(PME26)**
 Observation**(PME23)** Weekly reports**(PME27)**
 Case study**(PME24)**
 Other (please specify): _____ **(PME28)**

3. What kind of Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks did Upper Nile trading plc. projects use? You can tick more than one if applicable. (Please tick the appropriate answer) **(PME3)**

- Performance indicators**(PME31)** Logical Framework Approach**(PME34)**
 Results-based Framework**(PME32)** Logic Model**(PME35)**
 Formal Survey**(PME33)** Rapid Appraisal Method**(PME36)**
 Other (please specify): _____ **(PME37)**

Section II. CHALLENGES OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION (CME)

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement listed below.

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	There is inadequate understanding of M&E in organizational level. (CME1)					
2	Lack of time and resources to conduct M&E. (CME2)					
3	Inappropriate M&E implementation strategies are applied. (CME3)					
4	Unavailability of data gathering and analyzing tools. (CME4)					
5	There is lack of competent staff/skilled staff to carry out M&E practice. (CME5)					
6	Difficulty in communicating the results of M&E. (CME6)					
7	Data tampering during M&E result reporting period. (CME7)					

Part III: Accountability Practices (AP)

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	When M&E results indicate project shortcomings, clear actions are taken to address them and hold individuals accountable. (AP1)					
2	There is a well-defined chain of command that clarifies who is accountable for different project aspects based on M&E findings. (AP2)					
3	M&E reports are readily available to relevant stakeholders who can hold project teams accountable for performance. (AP3)					
4	In my experience, consequences for not meeting established performance goals are consistently enforced based on M&E data. (AP4)					
5	The M&E system within this project encourages a culture of ownership and individual accountability for achieving project objectives. (AP5)					
6	Overall, the M&E practices promote a sense of responsibility and accountability for project success among team members. (AP6)					

Part IV: Learning Practices (LP)

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement listed below. **(LP1)**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The current M&E practice of the firm helps in improving project performance. (LP11)					
2	Lessons learned from past projects are effectively applied to improve the outcomes of future projects (LP12)					
3	M&E helps in learning from experience and in adapting necessary changes. (LP13)					
4	Monitoring and Evaluation information was used to assist in decision-making and planning (LP14)					

2. How are lessons learned documented and disseminated within your company? (Please select all that apply) (LP2)

Project completion reports (LP21)

Training sessions for staff (LP22)

Knowledge management system (LP23)

Other (please specify): _____ (LP24)

Part VI: Open Ended Questions

1. In your own words, how would you describe the overall effectiveness of M&E practices in Upper Nile PLC's construction projects?

2. Are there any specific aspects of the current M&E practices that you find particularly helpful or unhelpful? Please explain.

3. What suggestions would you make for improving the implementation of M&E practices within Upper Nile PLC's construction projects?

4. Last comments, suggestions regarding M&E practices within Upper Nile Trading PLC's construction projects?
