**International Journal of Strategic Leadership, Education and Social Sciences (IJSLESS)**
Volume-2/Issue-1/January-March, 2026.
Print ISSN: 3115-4417; E-ISSN: 3115-4409.

**Original Research Article**

# IMPACT OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION MODIFICATION OF SOCIAL CHANGE: A REFLECT ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examined how the impact of monitoring and evaluation assist in the modification of social change that reflects on the community development practice of the nation, Nigeria. This is based on the fact that social change as a component of community development practice is very crucial in the administration and management of community engagement, participation and decision making organs of every community and society in terms of achieving sustainable change and innovations that affects the people's 'felt need' and collective ownership of development agendas. The overall idea is to build a 'participatory monitoring and evaluative' system that will move the community from passive to active beneficiary partners in the said business of discourse. Therefore, this paper discussed the conceptual clarification of terms, strategies for strengthening M&E, impact of monitoring and evaluation on social change: A reflective analysis of Nigeria communities. The paper concludes that monitoring and evaluation impact on modification of social change at this point should be devoid of stigmas, rather be positive in all aspects that will serve as a correlate to community development practice in Nigeria and beyond. Thus the paper suggested among others that all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), as well as Local Government Councils, should establish fully functional M&E units with defined roles and responsibilities.

**Keywords:** Monitoring, Evaluation, Social Change, Community Development.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Oji, E. W., & Orlu, L. N. (2026). Impact of monitoring and evaluation modification of social change: A reflect on community development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Strategic Leadership, Education and Social Sciences, 2*(1), 28-35. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18564156.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every government, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), policy makers etc, draw up guidelines, policies on how to provide livelihood or sustainable projects or programmes to her citizenry as to impact on their standard of living based on their needs and problems. To ascertain whether such community development project objectives have been achieved, it must pass the process of monitoring and evaluation for effectiveness and efficiency through modification that will arise from 'social change' perspectives.

Social change is the heartbeat of development; it represents the transformation of human attitudes, institutions and behaivours that collectively shape the destiny of communities and nations. Oji and Kpakol (2023) added that social change is an ever-present phenomenon in a given society, that is the reasons a distinction is sometimes made between process and structures that modify them as a societal change mechanisms, especially when dealing with communal life setting and sustainability. Social change depends on social entity based on individual; desires. In Nigeria, social change manifests through shifts in governance patterns, community participation, education, gender roles, technology and grassroots empowerment. Still, these shifts do not occur in isolation; they are guided, evaluated and refined through deliberate processes of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). These twin concepts act as the compass and mirror of development, one directing movement and the other reflecting progress.

Every growth endeavor must include monitoring and assessment. They guarantee that programmes not only begin with good intentions but also create demonstrable results. Within community development, especially within Nigeria's complicated social fabric, M&E serves pre-diagnostic tool that helps policymakers, project implementers, and stakeholders understand what works, what fails, and why. Through a rigorous tracking, data collecting and assessment M&E bridges the gap between theory and reality turning ambitious objectives into sustainable social transformation. Community development initiatives in Nigeria have frequently encountered obstacles like inadequate feedback systems, corruption, weak institutional capacity, and poor planning (Adebayo, 2019). Sustainable change is hampered by these problems. Monitoring and evaluation, when effectively implemented, can modify such developmental shortcomings by ensuring accountability, transparency and evidence-based decision-making (Eze & Chukwu, 2020). As a result, M&E and social transformation have a catalytic relationship that turns vision into measurable advancement rather than just being complimentary.

Thus, this discussion looks at how social change is affected by monitoring and assessment in the direction of change, with a focus on Nigerian community development. It examines fundamental principles, difficulties, and tactics, using knowledge from varied community development experiences across the country. In the end, it makes the case that M&E is not only a management process but also a moral need that guides Nigerian development practices.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

### Monitoring

The term ‘Monitoring’ refers to the ongoing, methodical collecting and analysis of data linked to the implementation of a project or programme. It is a managerial function that offers continuous feedback on how activities are happening, how resources are being used, and how outcomes are being achieved. Why do we monitor or go into monitoring? Generally, it is to determine a project ability to know whether the programme is useful or so that decisions can b made about the programme such as: continuity, call off, improve, add, more strategies or drop some strategies, increase funding, general modifications into the entire programme by providing more information and insight for optimizing proactive resources in order to ensure accelerated completion of the projects.

Secondly, to generate great impact and interest of the masses or people in participating actively in the implementation of the programme and provide evidence and data for appropriate

decision making to strengthen and upgrade projects and programmes. In a similar vein, monitoring serves as the eyes and ears of development management, by ensuring that projects remain aligned with planned objectives and timelines (Ojo, 2018). In community development, monitoring entails routinely observing community-based projects like rural electrification, water supply, agricultural extension services, and health outreach programs in order to identify new issues and modify plans as necessary.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation, on the other hand, goes beyond tracking progress to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of an intervention (World Bank, 2016). It assesses whether the intended goals were achieved and identifies lessons that can inform future projects. As Nwosu (2021) explained, evaluation provides the judgment lens through which the worth and impact of developmental actions are measured. In essence, while monitoring asks "Are we on the right path?", evaluation asks "Was the journey worth it?" Both processes work hand in hand. Monitoring generates real-time information for ongoing decisions, while evaluation provides deeper insights for learning and accountability. Evaluation assists to reduce demand from programme planners and community development workers who are under pressure to justify investment made on the programme by critical thinking mechanism.

Another is to gain feedback on the need for success or failure that is geared towards efficacy and effectiveness an adjustments. How do we evaluate a community development Programme? The steps are:

- identification of projects objectives
- determination of the actions taken and procedures
- collection, analysis and interpretation of the concrete evidence
- whom to assist in the administration of the programme
- comparism of the actual and expected outcomes
- drawing conclusions on the evidence available
- utilization of the funding in accordance with the guidelines to improve actions

**Social Change**

Ekpenyong in Oji et al. (2022) saw social change as significant alteration overtime in behaviour patterns and culture including norms and values. Bearing in mind that social change brought about the dramatic rise in formal education which represents a change in all ramifications of human existence either positive or negative in context. Social change refers to significant alterations in the structure, values, and behviours of a society over time. It encompasses shifts in norms, institutions, and power relations that shape human progress. For instance, the movement toward gender equality, democratic governance, digital literacy and youth empowerment in Nigeria reflects ongoing social change. Haralambos and Holborn (2013) saw social change is both inevitable and dynamic, often resulting from technological innovation, education, conflict, and collective action. Within the Nigerian setting, social change is deeply intertwined with efforts to reduce poverty, enhance civic participation, and promote inclusive growth.

From the point of view of the sociologist, social change deals with changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social interactions and institutions. This

also means that social change is the transformation of the social order of the community by making adjustment and verifications to social institutions in the family, economy, education, politics, health, religion etc. In this discourse, transformations at all levels must be checked, monitored and evaluated to see whether the objectives, aims or purposes for such transformational actions have been achieved. Believing that 'change' must come out of learning, recreation and reflection on the community development practice desired to the urban and rural communities of our society. This is because in some communities change is very rapid and remarkable, while to other, the change is slow. Educational involvement is also a yardstick for such actions.

**Community Development**

The process by which people of a community recognize their needs, gather resources, and carry out initiatives that enhance their quality of life is known as community development. It prioritizes empowerment, collaboration, and self-help. For this reason, Okoli (2020) characterizes it as "both a process and an outcome, the process of involving people in their own progress and the outcome of sustainable social and economic transformation." In Nigeria, community development activities include creating rural schools, enhancing agricultural production, empowering women's cooperatives, and supporting health awareness campaigns. Community development and societal transformation are inseparable twins: one inspires the other. Monitoring and evaluation serve as the crucial circulatory system that keeps the lifeblood of community development flowing, ensuring that community-based programs genuinely contribute to permanent social transformation.

**Strategies for Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Nigeria**

If development is a journey, then monitoring and evaluation are the headlights that guide it through the fog. Yet in Nigeria, these headlights often flicker or dim due to systemic weaknesses. Strengthening M&E therefore requires deliberate action, a weaving together of policy, capacity, technology, and community consciousness. The under listed are some of the strategies for strengthening monitoring and evaluation:

- Institutionalization of M&E Frameworks: A major strategy is the institutionalization of M&E across all layers of governance. Rather than being ad hoc or donor-driven, M&E should be integrated into the very DNA of policy formulation and project management. Although the 2020 National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy is a good place to start, community development actually occurs at the state and local government levels. This demand for the formation of functioning M&E units in every ministry, department, and agency (MDA), with defined mandates, enough funds, and competent staff. These units should not only exist on paper but work as the analytical heart of decision-making which will continually produce evidence for planning and change.
- Capacity Building and Professional Development: The strength of a country's evaluation system depends on its assessors. Nigeria must engage in establishing a corps of talented M&E experts, individuals fluent in both statistics and narrative, capable of interpreting data in ways that impact choices. Regular training seminars, certification programmes, and partnerships with institutions can assist overcome the capacity gap. The Nigerian

Evaluation Association (NEA) and the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) can work together to standardize training programs and encourage peer learning. Oghenekaro (2021) noted that data can speak, but only trained minds can hear its language for this reason.

- Adequate Funding Mechanisms: Without dependable funding, M&E activities rapidly fade. Budgets should spend at least 5-10% of overall project expenses to monitoring and evaluation efforts, as indicated by worldwide best practices. Instead of being combined with general administrative costs, this revenue should be ring-fenced and distributed directly to M&E units in order to guarantee accountability. Public-private collaborations may also help with field logistics, data platforms, and technology tools. Sustainable finance maintains continuity, enabling evaluators to track long-term change rather that short-term results.
- Adoption of Digital and Data Innovations: Technology has become the lifeblood of modern evaluation. Nigeria must adopt digital platforms, real-time dashboards, mobile data gathering tools, and GIS mapping technologies to boost accuracy and timeliness. To cut down on mistakes and delays, community-based evaluators, for example, can input project data straight from the field using mobile apps. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) may further coordinate these efforts by providing an integrated M&E site for development indicators nationally. Such technologies not only speed review but also democratize access to information, allowing citizens to see progress at the stroke of a mouse.
- Strengthening Feedback and Utilization Loops: Evaluation is only effective when its results motivate change. Nigeria has to institutionalize processes that link results to decision-making in order to improve usage. Following each significant evaluation, policy review forums, learning workshops, and "after-action reviews" ought to become routine procedures. Findings should be converted into clear suggestions, conveyed in plain language with decision-makers and communities alike. Ministries should be compelled to produce M&E response plans" explaining how they will respond on evaluation results. This loop from data to decision to reform guarantees that M&E becomes a living engine of change rather than a graveyard of useless reports.
- Promoting Community Ownership of M&E: Communities need to become witnesses of their own development rather than just being watched. Through participatory monitoring, residents may watch progress, evaluate the quality of services, and provide the government feedback. This strategy guarantees that success metrics represent regional goals and strengthens credibility. When a rural community in Kaduna utilized participatory scorecards to assess a health initiative, they found that staff rudeness rather than a lack of medications was the true problem. Such feedback spurred a retraining program and enhanced service delivery (Ahmed, 2022). As a result, empowerment via involvement enhances democracy and assessment.
- Legislative and Policy Support: Finally. By passing legislation requiring M&E for all publicly funded projects, Nigeria's legislature may function as a catalyst. These legislation would protect M&E processes from meddling and guarantee continuity across political shifts. Evaluation reports might be routinely reviewed by parliamentary committees, encouraging openness and evidence-based discussion. When M&E is protected by policy and enforced by law, it ceases to be optional it becomes institutional conscience.

**The Impact of Monitoring and Evaluation on Social Change: A Reflective Analysis of Nigerian Communities**

To reflect on M&E's impact is to witness the slow metamorphosis of society from dependence on agency, from guesswork to learning and from stagnation to motion. Monitoring and evaluation, when sincerely practiced, serve not just administrative needs but human awakening. Their fingerprints are visible across the fabric of Nigerian communities, especially in community development practice in the following ways:

- Strengthening Citizens Empowerment: Monitoring and evaluation today, have made citizens to see development as a right rather than a favor. People increasingly challenge, interact with, and demand performance from their leaders in environments where participatory M&E is implemented. This rise of civic consciousness fosters democratic responsibility, a societal shift far deeper than any road or school construction. For instance, community scorecard programs in Cross River State encouraged women's organizations to analyze agricultural subsidies, limiting elite control. The outcome was not just productive farming but also empowerment, a quiet revolution in visibility and voice (Ibe, 2020).
- Promoting Behavioral Change: Social transformation frequently begins with modifications in behavior and values. Through monitoring, people internalize a feeling of duty and discipline. Project staff begin to see themselves as stewards of results rather than mere salary earners. Communities learn to appreciate upkeep and openness. In many rural water projects, for instance, evaluation reports revealing recurrent borehole problems spurred communities to create maintenance committees. This act of self-government indicates not just project sustainability but moral growth which demonstrates the community learning to sustain what it has been given.
- Building Trust between Citizens and Government: Evaluation also acts as a bridge of trust. When government entities publish monitoring results openly, they show honesty and inspire collaboration. Citizens who observe transparency are more willing to engage and collaborate in future projects. Community-government relations in Lagos State were enhanced by the public disclosure of M&E data on the Education Infrastructure Renewal Program. Parents, seeing physical evidence of classroom upgrades, became more eager to support school upkeep through voluntary donations (Adekunle, 2021). Transparency fosters trust, and trust fosters long-term collaboration, creating a positive feedback loop for social advancement.
- Encouraging Innovation and Adaptation: Social transformation thrives on innovation, and innovation thrives on learning. M&E uncovers what works and what doesn't, sparking new ideas. Continuous monitoring of Nigeria's agricultural extension programs showed that farmers reacted more favorably to peer-led demonstrations than to formal lectures. "Farmer Field Schools," which are currently a national best practice, were developed as a result of this discovery (Chukwu, 2022). As a result, monitoring turns failures into opportunities for creativity and errors become ideas.
- Fostering Collective Ownership of Development: The deepest type of social transformation happens when growth ceases to be a government issue and becomes a common culture. Communities become active participants rather than passive recipients

through participatory M&E. They learn how to assess themselves, recognize minor victories, and make plans for future development. Essentially, M&E fosters a self-aware community that questions itself, "Are we growing? Are we learning?" This self-reflective practice is the lifeblood of growth and the pulse of change.

## CONCLUSION

Monitoring and evaluation impact on modification of social change at this point should be devoid of stigmas, rather positive in all aspects that will serve as a correlate to community development practice in Nigeria and beyond is the essence of this discourse because Community development is not merely a collection of projects; it is a living story of people striving toward collective betterment. In Nigeria, this story has often been told with enthusiasm but without sufficient evidence. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) serve as the lens through which that story gains clarity, the discipline that separates wishful thinking from measurable progress. Throughout this discourse, it has become clear that M&E is not a bureaucratic ritual but the lifeblood of development management. It fosters accountability, transparency, and learning; it nurtures innovation and empowers communities to own their transformation. When done well, it transforms passive recipients into active participants and converts institutions into learning organizations.

From a larger social viewpoint, the influence of M&E extends beyond programme performance. It impacts the way individuals see government, how groups organize themselves, and how society defines success. A well-monitored society is an aware society one capable of reflection, correction, and regeneration. In Nigeria, where social transformation is typically impeded by poor governance, limited feedback, and minimal involvement, robust M&E systems offer a road toward both institutional efficiency and moral development. However, several difficulties such as: limited finance, technical skill gaps, political intervention, inaccurate data, and the underutilization of results remain serious. These difficulties show how urgent reform is, not that there is no chance. Asking "Are we achieving what we set out to do, and are we doing it right?" on a daily basis is the key to turning M&E from an infrequent audit into a national habit. Monitoring and evaluation, when included into governance and community life, can be the quiet revolution Nigeria needs a revolution of perception, evidence, and accountability rather than just demonstrations and policies.

### Suggestions

Based on the discourse presented, the subsequent suggestions are advanced to strengthen the role of monitoring and evaluation in promoting modification and social change within Nigeria's community development landscape:

- All Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), as well as Local Government Councils, should develop fully functional M&E units with defined duties and responsibilities.
- Government and development partners should prioritize continued capacity building. Also universities and research institutes should introduce postgraduate programmes and professional certifications in M&E.

- To prevent evaluation from becoming an afterthought, a minimum of 5-10% of all project budgets should be earmarked for M&E activities.
- Digital advances such as mobile data collecting, online dashboards, and geographic information systems (GIS) should be mainstreamed into M&E practice. These technologies promote transparency, speed, and accuracy while providing real -time tracking of development.

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