

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in the Field of Urban Management: A Review of Current Practices in Egypt

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Abstract. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is widely considered to be a powerful public management tool that can be used to improve the way governments and organizations achieve results. The purpose of this tool is to provide feedback on the performance of policy, programs and projects. Egypt is currently on the track to develop M&E system in urban planning projects. This paper reviews current general practices of M&E in Egypt with special emphasis on the field of urban planning. It also analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the techniques in-use and their impacts on the local communities. The paper concludes with some recommendations for improving the process of M&E.

Keywords: Egypt, Monitoring and Evaluation, Urban management

1. Introduction

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a significant instrument of management in urban planning practice. Its implementation on development projects and determining their priorities has immense prospects to assure successful performance of such plans. With social, economic, and public reforms and improvement of information systems, increasing attention has been paid to evaluation and monitoring in planning policy making, academic research, and practice. It is expected that such Monitoring and Evaluation will play more important roles in the future and lead to improvement in planning procedures and management. Rendering governments to be accountable to their citizens for transparent results, and to provide more efficient and effective services; governments are thus devoting substantial efforts to strengthen their Monitoring and Evaluation systems and capacities to improve their performance and to assume a measurable level of programming and policy effectiveness and efficiency [21].

Over the last ten years, research and discussion about M&E in urban planning have been in progress and became a tool strongly linked to enhancing urban management. In this respect, Egypt is currently in the process of implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation system in urban planning projects to keep track of plans, gauge their performance at various stages of implementation, ensure delivery of quality service to the community and provide feedback to planners for the future. In Egypt the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) is the central authority responsible for preparing urban plans and implementation mechanisms, including Monitoring and Evaluation [6]. However, both GOPP and the local authorities have limited experiences and capacities to undertake an M&E process. This is due to decades of practices focused on plan preparation with less attention towards implementation follow up and evaluation of results.

This paper aims to diagnose and review current practices of M&E with special emphasis scope on urban plans. This paper consists of four sections. The first section reviews the Monitoring and Evaluation practices in the public sector within the Egyptian context. The next section reviews the Monitoring and Evaluation practices in the private sector within the Egyptian context. The following section explains the different tools of M&E within the context of the urban projects in Egypt. The final section suggests some recommendations to enhance current practices of M&E in the urban projects building upon the strengths of each of them.

2. The Monitoring & Evaluation Urban Planning Practices in the Public sector

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Governments should have a dedicated Monitoring unit that focuses on observing the process of urban planning as well as Evaluation section that conducts purely evaluation assessments. There are internal political and organizational pressures as well as potential external factors for building an M&E system; pressures that need to be acknowledged and addressed if the response is to be appropriate to the demand. The government of Egypt is in the process of initiative an M&E system to assess results and outcomes in all government programs. The Following summarizes some practices conducted within public institutions regarding the use of M&E systems in the urban planning:

2.1. The Strategic and Detailed Urban Plans for the Egyptian Cities Project

The Strategic and Detailed Urban Plans for the Egyptian Cities Project (SDUPECP) targets the large and medium sized cities, in total 177 cities. The GOPP employed a review system as a Monitoring and Evaluation tool in the SDUPECP. The review system aims at ensuring a high quality of the technical product “good plan” [5]. Within the context of the SDUPECP, a team is set up with experts from various departments of the GOPP to take responsibility for reviewing different studies supported by external consultants who conduct the preparation of the strategic urban plan. The basic standard for the review system is the terms of reference (TOR) of the project. There are no specific tools employed in the review system. Therefore, the primary role of the review system of the GOPP is to ensure that outputs are completely compliant and formatted as in the TOR [4].

2.2. The Government Initiative to Develop the Poorest 1000 Villages

The Government of Egypt has declared in 2007 its intention to target the poorest 1000 villages and create a sustained improved livelihood for the residents. The Ministry of Local Development (MOLD) monitors using a logical framework the central elements of the government initiative [11]. The Social Contract Center (SCC) with a team of international experts developed the logical framework detailing activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts relevant to the government initiative programs, along with their indicators. Monitoring indicators were selected through a consultation process with relevant line ministries and other government entities involved in the initiative. This logical Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework follow a traditional linear approach e.g.: Implemented activities of the initiative would logically lead to direct outputs in the short run reflecting increased availability of public services and accessibility of residents in these local communities to the set of public services related to the planned programs. And as a direct result of increased availability of and accessibility to these public services, a set of outcomes are realized; these outcomes reflect the improvement in the quality of public services and in the level of public satisfaction. And then the implementation of the government initiative resulting in increased greater satisfaction and utilization and augmented access to markets by the beneficiaries is envisioned to culminate in the long run into sustained improved livelihood of the residents in the targeted local communities [8].

2.3. The Strategic Plan 2007 – 2022

The strategic Plan provides a comprehensive framework comprising socio-economic development goals, strategies and relevant policies. It embraces both investment programs and projects aiming at expanding production capacities and improving social services and infrastructure. The department of urban development of the Ministry of Planning (MOP) monitors the plan by continuing field visits to identify the implementation of annual plans periodically on the dates specified by the Minister of Planning and to find practical solutions to the problem that may be facing the implementation of these projects and measure annually the efficiency of development projects [12]. And then present an annual report to monitor the works that be done and to identify the works that will be completed next year and also present every five years a proposal report for the next five-year financial plan. According to these reports, The MOP will evaluate and update the plan at the beginning of preparation the Five-Year Plan 2012 - 2017 as well as the beginning of preparation the Five-Year Plan 2017 - 2022 so as to measure the efficiency of achieving the desired objectives, as well as identifying reasons for success and failure through a process of evaluation and drawing lessons learned and thus determining the recommendations to edit and update the plan so that the objectives of the short-term for the next five years ,the projects and the development programs will contribute to achieve the vision of the plan in 2022 [12].

3. The Monitoring & Evaluation Urban Planning Practices in the Private sector

Multilateral development institutions, donor governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizens' groups, and civil society are all voicing their interest in increased accountability and transparency and concern for tangible results and require an M&E system on all urban planning projects. The organizations should use the M&E to know when plans are not working, and when circumstances have changed and also help them devise appropriate policies, manage financial and other resources, and fulfill their mandates and promises to internal and external stakeholders. The Following summarizes some projects of the private organizations used an M&E system in the urban planning:

3.1. RO'YA Poverty Alleviation in Ezbet Yacoub

The EFG Hermes Foundation is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization and has taken an active role in implementing the RO'YA project. This project aims alleviating the poverty level of local residents of Ezbet Yacoub - Beni Sweif governorate. The process of the project consists of two phases and the Monitoring and Evaluation of this project is based by the participation of the community. Each phase was monitored by a survey questionnaire designed by Hermes. Questionnaires were distributed to the stakeholders after each phases of the project for monitoring and evaluation the implemented services. After that, the Hermes foundation staffs evaluate the results of the questionnaires and make a progress report to evaluate the progress of the project and the improvement in the livelihood of the population [1].

3.2. The Strategic Urban Plan of Qwesna City

The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) is fully responsible for managing the project and preparing strategic urban plan of Qwesna city [18]. Three fundamental tools are employed throughout the entire process of M&E to enable the technical team fulfills both general and specific responsibilities successfully [19]:

- The technical team self assessment aims at allowing the chance for technical teams to report on every stage in both milestones one and two and express their reflections by answering questions assessing the achievement of objectives, monitoring results and evaluating methods used through the entire process of preparing the SUP.
- The monitoring progress tool aims to assess the level of stakeholders' participation through the entire process of preparing the strategic urban plans (SUPs). It aims at ensuring that the right people are involved, by assessing who is participating, in which activities, and what their concerns and contributions are. It also allows the assessment of their level of participation and its evolution over time.
- The evaluation sheet is genuinely developed by the M&E team of the project. It is an excel file, which contains certain items to enable reporting and evaluating the deliverables of each milestone. It includes the expected outputs as specified in the TOR, delivery status for each output, indicators of output quality and comments on the completeness of each output.

3.3. The Rehabilitation & Upgrading of the Manshiet Nasser Informal Settlement

On behalf of the German government and the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development (MoED), German Development Bank (KFW) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) are carrying out a participatory development project to turn Manshiet Nasser from an informal area into a legalised district [7].

The monitoring of this project is based on participatory socio-economic survey and mechanisms of transparent dialogue with local inhabitants in both the planning and management processes [10]. Based on the available documents and reports, the evaluators examine the project and its background. They make a Citizen Satisfaction Survey for capturing people's opinion about their living conditions and the level of availability, quality, and efficiency of public services. Also, they conduct local interviews with representatives of the executing agency and the target group, analyse data and statistics, assess the statements of other external donors and stakeholders and then arrive at a final assessment of the project [15]. KFW Evaluation Department examines about three to five years after the start-up of operation of the project, a representative sample of the measures is subject to a thorough ex-post evaluation. Therein, the whole project

cycle is reappraised, from project identification to needs assessment to operational experience, everything with a view to the impacts achieved [9].

3.4. The Participatory Slum Upgrading in El-Hallous and El-Bhatini, Ismailia, Egypt

The purpose of the project is to develop and implement a participatory approach for physical and social upgrading and community development to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers in El-Hallous and El-Bahtini in Ismailia City [2]. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) use a Monitoring and Evaluation system to measure and assess project performance and to manage the outcomes and outputs as reflected in the project results framework. The following UNPD Monitoring and Evaluation tools deployed:

The project operation plan (POP) prepared to monitor yearly progress towards the achievement of results at the outcomes/output levels, through the establishment of indicators and annual targets, the timeframe of the POP covers the lifetime of the project.

Project annual work plan (AWP) has a time frame of 12 months and thus AWP prepared for each year of project implementation. The AWP reflect activities and relevant indicators which used to measure progress.

The technical advisory unit (TAU) lead by the National project coordinator prepare biannual progress reports as required by the Debt swap management committee to assess progress towards the implementation of the annual work plan and use GPS and satellite / GIS technology to locate existing slum areas on the map to be able to sense & evaluate the existing and updated situation [17].

UNDP conduct field visits and biannual meetings to follow-up and assess progress

The project steering committee distributes to the stakeholders various survey forms like urban, social and priority problems and then reviews these documents to be able to form an opinion to which extent has the project fulfilled its development objective, follow-up and feedback on performance project progress and implementation.

The project is evaluated by an independent consultant. The timing of the project evaluation, at mid- term or at six months prior to the completion of project activities, as well as the terms of reference for the evaluation agreed upon by the project steering committee and present a evaluation report. The Evaluation Report reviews the project design as presented in the Project document; activities and tasks executed during the implementation phase, then draws results of this evaluation activity and lists some future recommendation and actions to be considered by the UNDP [16].

3.5. The Development of Zifta city

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) was participated in preparing the strategic plan of Zifta city that is structured to deliver local and inclusive decision making and to ensure a high likelihood of implementation [14]. SIDA used an M&E system to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources and assists in determining the success or failure of a program. They have used the following M&E tools to monitor and ensure participatory and subsidiary decision making and evaluate by looking forward to the potential for implementation:

- Reports analyze the situation, the problems of the city and determine the priorities.
- Participatory assessment use qualitative participatory approaches to produce community resource mapping/needs assessments that will be shared with the top leadership as well as the managers of the project and with the concerned local communities and with other stakeholders from the civil society and the private business sector [3].

4. Discussion

In all of the previously analyzed projects, the M&E system is considered as an important management tool in urban planning that has great potential to assist many planning practices. A well-designed M&E system should ensure both public participation and the technical quality in the project to improve the performance of the projects. The time, cost and skills required for each M&E tool should be taken into consideration to enhance the process of the system.

The table (1) shows the different M&E tools used by the organizations. This table compares some different factors: the time and cost consuming procedures to collect, analyze, and report information, the level of skills needed to be able to use the tool and finally, if that tool focuses on ensuring public participation or technical quality. And based on the results of the table, the chart (1) illustrates the effectiveness of the M&E system of each organization.

Table 1: M&E tools used

	Organization	M&E tool used	Time spent	Cost paid	Skills required	Ensure high technical quality		Ensure effective public participation	
						Preparation Phase	Implementation Phase	Preparation Phase	Implementation Phase
Public Sector	GOPP	Review system TOR	■	○	■	■	×	×	×
	MOLD	Logical framework	○	○	○	■	○	○	○
	MOP	Annual reports	○	○	■	■	×	×	×
Private Sector	EFG-Hermes	Questionnaires	×	×	×	×	×	■	■
		Progress report	○	×	○	○	○	×	×
	UN-HABITAT	Evaluation sheet	×	×	○	■	×	×	×
		Monitoring progress	○	×	×	×	×	■	×
		Technical team self assessment	○	○	■	■	×	×	×
	KFW	Citizen Satisfaction Survey	○	○	○	×	×	■	■
		Local interviews	×	×	×	×	×	■	■
		Ex-post evaluation	■	■	■	■	■	×	×
	UNDP	Operation plan	○	○	○	○	○	×	×
		Project annual work plan	○	○	○	○	○	×	×
		Biannual Progress report	○	○	■	■	■	×	×
		Field visits and meetings	×	×	○	×	×	■	■
		Survey	■	○	○	×	×	■	■
		GIS mapping	×	■	■	■	■	×	×
		Evaluation Report	■	■	■	■	■	×	×
SIDA	Reports	■	○	■	■	×	×	×	
	Participatory assessment	×	○	×	×	×	■	×	

Low × Medium ○ High ■

It depicts that most of the projects that have an M&E system are planned and implemented by foreign private organizations or the international NGOs incorporate with the public sector to plan & follow up the projects. In addition, to measure the progress of the project the public organizations used one M&E tool for each project in order to ensure the high technical quality. On the other hand, the private organizations used more than one tool in order to incorporate an evaluation of both high technical quality and public participation. In the public sector the MOLD tried to develop an M&E system by using the logframe tool that can ensure the public participation.

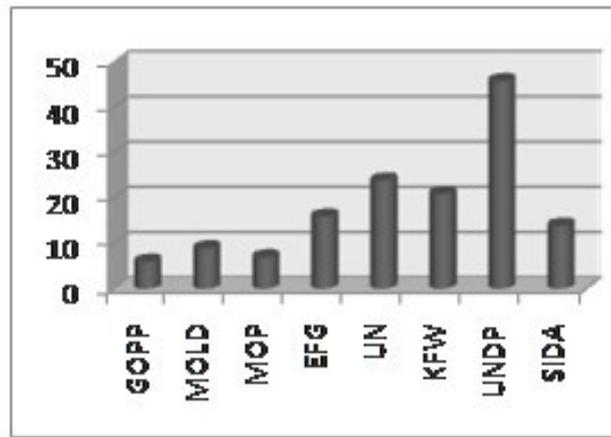


Chart 1: Effectiveness M&E system

The most successful M&E system was done in upgrading El-Hallous and El-Bhatini slums in Ismailia. The UNDP have used a well designed M&E system to monitor and evaluate the progress of the project.

The government faced many challenges for the development of an operational M&E system in Egypt e.g.: The government still had limited experience in working with monitoring and no experience of evaluation and the issue of poor capacity in technical and managerial skills and there is a widespread lack of integration and cooperation between the M&E function and project management. The public organization focuses on measuring if the project is on track only not if the project is achieving its desired objectives as a result of irrelevant and poor-quality information is produced through monitoring as it focuses only on physical and financial aspects and ignores factors such as project outreach, effect , impact and the actual needs of the stakeholders . The urban plans are well prepared and organized by the government but that the mechanisms for the application of the principles of M&E system during the implementation of urban planning projects are still not sufficient or effective to the extent required in general. Finally, The Egyptian law doesn't provide for adequate rules and effective control for the urban plans.

5. Recommendations

These recommendations are for enhancing the current government practices of M&E in the urban planning projects. The well-designed M&E system can be summarized as follows:

- Coordination among government agencies, civil society entities and external support program, though challenging, is necessary for effective and sustainable urban development.
- Ensuring effective participation from different stakeholders' groups to monitor at an early stage of planned interventions that can reduce the scope of conflicts and enable mobilization of resources for effective implementation.
- Combining varied M&E tools which improve the monitoring of activities and measure achievement of results to ensure a high likelihood of implementation of the project.
- Integrating the M&E tools that ensure effective stakeholder participation and ensure the high quality of technical product due to depth review of the different sectors the projects
- Establishing an Integrated network between, the public organizations and the National Urban Observatory (NUO) ,established by the GOPP, therefore the NUO can provide all relevant data and urban indicators to them for well setting national urban policy, preparing urban development program and plans and monitoring their implementation [13].
- Using computerized tools in the M&E system e.g.: The tool of Geographic information systems (GIS) can be used to analyze complex data collected, to be time-consuming and to facilitate an accurate Monitoring and Evaluation of the projects progress. Another tool, the EgyInfo, launched by the government of Egypt and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), has great potential for the advancement of monitoring, evaluation and policy analysis in Egypt, it provides highly accessible, reliable and timely data that be used as a framework for development and precisely tracks projects progress so decision makers and policymakers would act consciously [20].

- The state institutions and their subsidiaries that are responsible of the urban plans in Egypt should be linked together to ensure the success of the projects process and to fill the gap between the plan preparation and implementation.

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