PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION: A CRITICAL FACTOR IN BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY.

A Paper Presented by:

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ABSTRACT

Year after year, successive governments have expected and dreamed to realize the full implementation of national development plans and annual budgets by achieving infrastructural development and economic sustainability. This cannot be said to have been achieved. Hence, the need for change. Any project delivering change will meet with resistance and conflict.

Investments in capital projects is essential for economic growth and development, yet there is widespread dissatisfaction with the outcomes of infrastructural investment, capital budget and construction project implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of budget implementation and infrastructure developments provide better means of learning from past experience, improving quality and service delivery, planning and allocation of resources, particularly demonstrating results against key performance indicators (KPI) and bench marks as part of accountability to key stakeholders and engraving sustainability as a vital criterion in planning. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should therefore be an integral part of my project design, implementation plan and completion to ensure projects are executed to meet up with progressive national development.

This paper starts by defining key words/phases, clarifying their differences and similarities identifying some of the issues and challenges facing project monitoring and evaluation and concludes by making recommendation on institutionalizing M&E as part of entrenching compliance with specifications and best practice in budgeting, planning especially sustainable implementation of national budgets and capital project delivery in Nigeria.

Findings have shown that countries like Canada, Mexico, South Africa have to a reasonable extent institutionalize M&E as a policy in governance with tremendous benefits, hence Nigeria needs to do the same.
1.0 INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E).

Ideally, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be an integral part of any development process unfortunately sometimes it is brought into development planning as a contingent element. This is not supposed to be so. According to Ika et al., (2010) project monitoring and evaluation is even more critical than planning in achievement of project success. They reiterated that project monitoring and evaluation ranks highly as one of the major project success factors.

No economy can grow without investment in infrastructural development. Wells (2013) stressed that investment in capital projects is essential for economic growth and development, yet there is widespread dissatisfaction with the outcomes of construction investment. He further stated that, major challenges in developing countries include inappropriate projects, high prices, poor quality, excessive time and cost overruns, inadequate maintenance and low returns. These problems impact negatively on development and poverty alleviation, hence the dissatisfaction and the search for ways to get better “value for money” from the construction industry investments. Despite the challenges confronting the construction industry; researchers have continued to suggest ways of improving services delivery in the industry; one of such ways is the massive campaigning from researchers and professionals in the built environment to adopt concepts of project monitoring and evaluation as a value for money (VfM) tool in improving project success in the industry (Nzekwe, 2015).

According to Kwado (2013), Nigeria with a population of over 160 million, an expanding middle class, an active and increasingly sophisticated banking sector and consistent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of more than 6%, our economy is expected to replace South Africa as Africa’s largest economy by the end of the decade. He further stated that capital projects investments in Nigeria have made the country’s construction industry to be growing faster than, that of India and this has been identified as a “global hotspot from now until 2020”

M & E should be an integral part of any project design and development plan as well as project and budget implementation and completion to ensure projects are implemented to meet up with progressive national development intentions. Government officials development managers and civil society are increasingly aware of the importance of M&E of development activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation provides a better means of learning from past experience, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources, and demonstrating results as part of accountability to key stakeholders (IEG, 2007).

Some of the issues addressed in this paper include the differences between project monitoring and project supervision, difference between monitoring and evaluation, major similarities between monitoring and evaluation, planning/designing a monitoring and evaluation programme, benefits or relevance of monitoring and evaluation to budget implementation, infrastructure development and project sustainability.

This paper also identify some of the challenges associated with the practice of M&E in Nigeria and why it has to be a critical component of the current change mantra to achieve complete budget implementation, infrastructure development and project sustainability. Findings have shown that countries like Mexico, Canada and South Africa that have to very reasonable extent institutionalized M & E as a national policy in governance have reaped tremendous benefits, hence Nigeria need to do same.
2.0 DEFINITIONS:

Agreeing that the interpretation of the concept(s) may be the same, different authors may present their definition from different perspectives and emphasis. I have therefore presented my definitions below as appropriate to this paper.

2.1 What is Project Monitoring

This is the systematic assessment of the progress of a project to confirm compliance with designed objective, specification, work plan/schedule, anticipated completion time and budgeted cost. It may involve physical site visits, collection of information from stakeholders, recording and documenting work progress, seeking clarification where need be, and reporting.

2.2 What is Project Evaluation?

This is a process of reviewing and reflecting on what has happened or what has been done by who, on a project with the aim of ascertaining the extent to which the expected outcomes or intended impacts have been met. It helps to discover the strengths and weaknesses, the successes and failures, whether the project was worth the cost and efforts involved and the lessons learnt is used in the design and planning of future projects.

2.3 What is Budget Implementation?

Collins English dictionary 5th Edition defines Budget as an itemized summary of expected income and expenditure of a country, company etc over a specified period, usually a financial year. Can also be an estimate of income and a plan for domestic expenditure or the total amount of money allocated for a specific purpose during a specified period.

Similarly, Collins English dictionary define Implementation as accomplishment, carrying out, discharge, enforcement, performance realization.

Budget implementation is therefore, the realization or accomplishment of planned policy, economic and infrastructural developments through systematic and prudent application of financial allocation for specific expenditures within expected income for the specified period of time.

2.4 What is Infrastructure Development?

Simply put, infrastructure – based development represents that proportion of a nation’s resources specially directed towards long term assets (Transportation, energy and social infrastructure-housing, schools, hospitals) for the purpose of long term economic efficiency (stimulating growth in economically lagging regions and fostering technological innovation) and social equity (providing education housing and healthcare that is affordable).

2.5 What is Project Sustainability?

Webster’s New International Dictionary defines sustain as: to cause to continue, (as in existence), to keep up, especially without interruption, to prolong.

World Commission on Environment and Development under Chairmanship of Gro Harlem Bruntt Land 1987 defined “Sustainable development as development that
meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) define sustainable development as the process of building equitable, productive and participatory structures to increase the economic empowerment of communities and their surrounding regions.

From the foregoing and in the context of this paper, I can define project sustainability as: The ability of a project to continue to achieve set goals and objectives beyond the life span of its initiators for as long as it is still politically and economically viable and environmentally – friendly.

2.6 Difference Between Project Supervision and Project Monitoring

The terminologies “project supervision” and “project monitoring” are sometimes used interchangeably as meaning or implying the same assignment. But this is not true while Project Monitoring is set to assess compliance with procurement terms, project objective and specifications and report findings; Project Supervision is to ensure enforcement, quality-control and if need be the improvement of project design in order to achieve desired goal and expected outcome.

The monitoring consultant cannot issue instructions related to alterations/vanations or quality control on a project but the supervising consultant can.

2.7 Difference between Project Evaluation and Project/Contract Auditing

Similarly, project evaluation and Project/Contract Auditing are used as implying the same assignment but again this is untrue.

While Project Evaluation is emphasizing the review of the process with the view of ascertaining the extent to which the expected outcomes and intended impacts have been met so that lessons learnt can be used in other project; Project/Contract Auditing is concerned about the examination and verification of documents, costs, procedures, conditions laid sown as a basis for administering the project/contract and total compliance with the contract or procurement process, subject to the terms of the audit.

3.0 PLANNING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and Evaluation should be incorporated into every infrastructure and budget planning process. Good monitoring and evaluation design during project or budget preparation is a much broader exercise than just the development of indicators.

3.1 Planning (Designing) Monitoring

The following are key components of a good project monitoring design/plan.

i) Clear statements of measurable and achievable objective(s) for the project and its components for which indicators can be defined. Example: Construction and completion of a 5-Bedroom detached duplex. Procurement documents.

ii) A structured set of indicators, covering outputs of goods and services generated by the project and their impact on beneficiaries. There are five types of indicators namely:

- Input indicators: Quantified and time bound statements of resources to be provided.
➢ Process indicators: Measurement of activities or events during implementation based on an activity plan. Date for completion of substructure as indicated on work plan/work programme.

➢ Output indicators: shows the immediate physical and financial outputs of the project. Completed milestone or valuation of work in progress.

➢ Impact outcome/Indicators: Early indications of impact or outcome obtained by sampling beneficiaries’ perceptions about the project. This is a leading indicator with the benefits of stakeholders’ consultation and early warning in problems challenges that could arise.

➢ Exogenous indicators: This covers factors outside the control of the project but might affect its outcome including risks. During project implementation careful monitoring of enabling environment can identify risk indicators such as change in policy decisions or fundamental change in the assumptions behind the project – potential risk or conflict.

➢ At inception emphasis are laid on indicator of implementation progress (input and process indicators) and later on indicators of development results (output and impact/outcome indicators).

iii) Standards/Provisions for collecting data and managing project records or information. Data collected should be compatible with existing statistics or practice, affordable and at reasonable cost. Source of funding ascertained. Periodic valuations, progress meetings.

iv) Institutional arrangements for gathering, analyzing and reporting project data and for investing in capacity building to sustain the monitoring service. Final accounts, as-built drawings.

v) Proposals for the ways in which the findings of the monitoring exercise will be fed back into decision-making. Project close-out report to include lessons learnt.

3.2 Planning (Designing) Evaluation

Project Evaluation Plan should:

i) Define and frame the evaluation: Define what is to be evaluated, develop program theory or model and identify possible unintended results (both positive and positive) that will be important to address in the evaluation. Frame the boundaries for the evaluation, setting the parameters (purpose, criteria and questions to be used) for judging performance.

ii) Manage the evaluation: This includes deciding who will conduct the evaluation and who will make decisions about it. Understand and engage stakeholders, how and who will manage documents and agreements.

iii) Collect and synthesise data: This considers how data will be collected and synthesised. Combine qualitative and quantitative data, using measures and indicators.

iv) Understand and describe activities, outcomes, impacts and contexts.
v) Reporting findings, what are the reporting requirements, types of reporting formats, appropriate for intended users should report include recommendations?

vi) Implementation of findings: who and who will the recommendations be implemented or used in planning future projects. How will you support the use of the findings of the evaluation process?

3.3 **Major Differences between Monitoring and Evaluation.**

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<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<td>a.</td>
<td>Monitoring is about inspecting (looking and seeing), verifying (listening, hearing and finding out) and reporting (recording and clarifying).</td>
<td>Evaluation is building upon the process involved in Monitoring but further investigating (review and reflect) the effects, to judge the overall value/benefit or otherwise of what has been done, and lessons learnt put into future development plan.</td>
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<td>b.</td>
<td>Monitoring is carried out to ensure that all stakeholders in a project or development activity are adequately aware and properly informed of the on-goings on the project</td>
<td>Evaluation is carried out so that people who are involved (and other stakeholders) in a project/program can reflect on what has or has not been achieved.</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>Monitoring is carried out to ensure that day-to-day management decisions can be taken, and an accurate and responsible account can be given on how resources and opportunities are being utilized.</td>
<td>Evaluation is aimed at discovering the Project’s/Programme’s strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, also assess whether the cost and efforts invested were worth it. Lessons learnt are gathered for future developments.</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>Monitoring may be done by persons responsible for or involved in the project or programme so as to confirm whether things are going according to plan or need to be adjusted.</td>
<td>Evaluation may be done by outsiders who have special skills or trainings or experience by which to judge the effectiveness or otherwise of the project or programme.</td>
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<td>e.</td>
<td>Monitoring can be done periodically, frequently or even continuously so that problems or opportunities are discovered early enough, so that appropriate management decisions can be made to keep the project or programme steadily on the path of achieving its goals and objectives.</td>
<td>Evaluation is mostly done at the end of a project to produce a report for consideration on whether the project or programme has been a success or a failure.</td>
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3.4 **Major Similarities between Monitoring and Evaluation.**

i) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are both positive management processes relating to efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and a constant striving towards a better quality of development work.

ii) The common purpose of carrying out M & E is to ensure a better quality of useful outcomes from the effort and resources (investments) put into development activities.

iii) Monitors and Evaluators need to keep adequate records, and report to other people or organizations who may need to know what is happening and who may have a higher level of responsibility for what is being done.
iv) Both Monitoring and Evaluation can be done in a more participatory way by engaging those involved or benefitting from the project or programme (stakeholders), with or without the involvement of outside specialists.

v) Monitoring and Evaluation can be done during the life of a project, to learn in depth how it is progressing, in good time to rectify any problems and to seize on new opportunities.

vi) Monitoring needs to be done close to or at the project/programme site/venue, but the results also need to be accessed by interest groups swiftly so that identified implications or local requirements can be acted upon.

vii) Evaluation is about value judgment so it cannot be done remotely by outside experts who are unaware of local values and priorities. The processes should be close to the people involved in or affected by the activities of the project or programme.

3.5 RELEVANCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M & E) IN AN ERA OF CHANGE.

3.5.1 To Budget Implementation

The ritualistic process of identification, planning, presenting, debating, approving and implementing budgets by Federal and State Governments has been changing its dramatic tempo over the years. Ranging from inadequate and unrealistic estimate to inappropriate or unpredictable oil price benchmark to incomplete, or late submission; sometimes inconclusive needing supplementary, delayed and incomplete implementation.

Lately, alteration of figures and eventual disappearance and re-appearance of documents or projects from the budget. These various facets of this national dilemma will be x-rayed from different perspectives by other resource persons during this workshop as expected considering the various sub-themes. The overbearing and undue political interest and influence, unprofessional, non-inclusive and non-participatory process of budget preparation ab initio sets a stumbling block for its implementation.

Budget planning must be based on need assessment, be participatory to set the tone for effective monitoring and sustainable implementation. When M & E is included from planning stage and conducted at the right time, covering all aspects of the budget, properly co-ordinated and the results or reports presented in a user-friendly format, M & E can provide a highly cost-effective way to improve the performance, implementation and impact of national and state budgets, planning and development policies, programmes and projects in the following ways:

- By assessing the efficiency with which the various components of the yearly budget are implemented: - At the moment this responsibility is vested with the National Planning Commission. The way and manner it is carried out cannot be described as adequate.

Similarly, the National Assembly (The Senate and House of Representatives) through their various House Committees as part of their oversight functions also carry out some sort of Monitoring/Evaluation. Again, this has not improved the budget implementation over the successive years.
A well-structured, planned, co-ordinated and institutionalized M & E program incorporated into the current “Change Agenda” of the Federal/State Governments will provide a framework for professional M & E and will document the performance level of every component of the national/state budgets (Ministries, Departments and Agencies). This will serve as a policy document and feedback on budget implementation which will be made available to all stakeholders (planners, implementing agencies, contractors, consultants, beneficiaries/end-users).

Such a process and document will in itself be an instrument that will facilitate accountability and transparency in governance and mitigate corruption.

➢ By providing guidelines for planning and implementing future budgets:- The document or report on a comprehensive M & E will be a useful guide in planning subsequent budgets. Currently, there is lack of continuity in budget implementation particularly the constituency projects. In most cases when a Senator or House of Representative or House of Assembly Member is not voted back to the house or ends his/her tenure, the constituency projects initiated are abandoned.

➢ By promoting democratic values and participatory governance:- Badom (2015) observed that accountability and ethical corporate governance have been fragrantly abused in Nigeria particularly by public servants and the efforts by anti-corruption agencies at curtailing them are frustrated by lack of political will to enforce anti-corruption laws at all levels, administrative and judicial bottlenecks.

A properly institutionalized M & E process and document backed by legislation will be an instrument that will facilitate accountability and transparency in governance and mitigate corruption, which is what the present administration’s change mantra is focused on achieving. Various stakeholders (Legislators, MDAs, Beneficiaries/End-users, Contractors, Consultants, NGOs, etc) by virtue of the freedom of information (FOI) Act 2011 will be able to access the documents, review it and their views incorporated in subsequent budgets, etc.

3.5.2 Relevant of M & E to Infrastructure Development.

In view of the reported unsatisfactory performance of the previous national budgets, President Mohammadu Buhari promised Nigerians full implementation of the 2016 budget. In the present day happenings we have started hearing of claims by Federal Government representative(s) that this might not be possible for some reasons.

Every year, as soon as the budget figures are made public, commentators and analyst seem to adjudge the budgetary competence in various ways particularly based on the percentage allocation to capital/infrastructural development, recurrent expenditure, sectoral allocations (Education, Defense, Health, etc) with little or no emphasis on how the allocations utilization can be effectively monitored.

Ishaya and Adogbo (2013) submitted that Nigeria is no exception; the local construction industry is one of the main economic engine sectors, supporting Nigeria national economy. However, many local construction projects
evidential project – specific causes such as: unavailability of materials, excessive amendments of design and drawings, poor coordination among participants, ineffective monitoring and feedback.

They continued, project performance can be measured and evaluated using a large number of related to various dimensions (groups) such as time, cost, quality, client satisfaction, client changes, business performance, health and safety (Cheung et al, 2004; DETR 2000).

The importance and relevance of monitoring and evaluation in ensuring realization of planned development in this years budget need not be over emphasized but include the following:

- Limited resources available necessitates that emphasis should be on value-for-money and timely delivery of infrastructure projects according to specifications, predetermined indicators and assumptions. This cannot be achieved without effective M & E which will provide timely information and early warning signs (EWS) to confirm project is still on track for early completion or there is need to adjust project implementation plan.

- High stakeholder expectation: More than ever before, the Nigerian populace (home and abroad) and the international community expect that flaws that were noticed in previous budgets’ infrastructure development plan before this administration should not repeat itself believing that this is a corrective regime mandated to change things for the better.

Only early commissioning of M & E system involving stakeholders participation can provide timely information that can be readily inputted into the budget implementation of infrastructure projects.

- Dwindling and unpredictable income necessitates periodic review at short intervals of the targets, anticipated outcomes, assumptions and risk factors considered during planning and budgeting for the infrastructure development. This will steadily provide evidence-based report to guide in decision-making and improve performance on the infrastructure projects nationwide.

Similarly, the achievements and progress or otherwise recorded on the projects will determine decisions on resource mobilization, performance of Contractors/Consultants and identify environmental or regional or any peculiar project challenges.

3.5.3 Relevance of M & E to Project Sustainability

In line with the theme of the discourse, project sustainability is considered here as the ability of the projects being planned to address the economic environmental and social needs of the present and future generation of Nigerians as end users through the efficient use of available resources.

For the projects currently included in Governments budget to be sustainable, it means it must meet the short-term needs of Nigerians economically, environmentally and socially (Improving the lives of the citizenry) and also include structures, systems and frameworks that will ensure that what has been gained will not be lost in the near future.
Government must therefore have key performance indicators to measure the government policies (structures, systems and frameworks) against meeting sustainability plans or roles. Only proper knowledge-based, all-inclusive, people-oriented sustainability plan which will identify and recognize the main challenges for the present and future generations can stand the test of time.

Badom L. (2015) submitted that it is only through systematic planned monitoring and evaluation (M & E) programme properly included in the project design from project or program initiation (budgeting stage) that we can ensure compliance with sustainability factors, support, appropriate technology, economic and financial viability, environmental protection, socio-cultural/gender issues and institutional strengthening and capacity building for beneficiaries (where applicable).

Monitoring and Evaluation is therefore very relevant and vital process for ensuring continuity, feedback for planning future projects and achieving sustainable development generally.

Effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) process properly instituted or incorporated into the design or planning of an infrastructure project will create feedback and learning culture from the project inception to completion by all stakeholders thereby promoting the benefit of continuous learning, better communication, planning and coordination on government policies and programs.

4.0 CHALLENGES TO M&E ON BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION, INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY.

With my involvement and supervision of over 400 Building and Engineering, Oil & Gas infrastructure development projects nationwide for government (Federal & State), private developers etc, the following have been identified as some of the challenges faced in carrying out M & E consultancy services.

i) Non-inclusion of M & E in project planning, design and development. Most of the time incorporated during project as a contingency item because there is no M&E plan when project was conceptualized.

ii) Project supervision is mostly confused with M& E services. The job specification and scope of services are not defined.

iii) Poor project documentation, lack of properly defined key performance indicators, incomplete design, BOQ, Contract condition etc.

iv) Beneficiaries are not actively involved in the planning, implementation and M&E of projects particularly Constituency projects.

v) Fraudulent intention of project executors will try to frustrate M&E particularly when they are not complying with specification.

vi) Lean budget for M&E leading to cutting corners and the use of employees to cut corners.

vii) Security and environmental risk sometimes planned by aggrieved stakeholders.

viii) Lack of properly registered professional body to regulate the practice including continuous professional development and standardization.

ix) No established rules, regulations and legislation to enforce the product, report etc emanating from M&E.
CONCLUSION

Currently, the National Planning Commission oversees Monitoring and Evaluation in Nigeria. Lately, the African Evaluation Association (AFreA) working with the UNDP have expressed interest in formation of National Voluntary Organization for Professional Evaluators (VOPE) just as they have South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA).

Similar organizations are Evaluation Association of Kenya, Uganda Evaluation Association, Canadian Evaluation Society, Mexico, Australia, Singapore are all listed.

What the countries mentioned above have in common is that Monitoring and Evaluation have been institutionalized and main streamed into policy-making process; designed, adapted and implemented, home-made readiness tool by which their governments are held accountable for performance, undertake evidence-based evaluation and assessment of public policies based on the outputs, outcomes and impacts realized.

Nigerians need to strengthen the existing weak M & E policies (where necessary develop new ones) to advance an enabling environment for nationally-owned transparent, systematic and standard developed M&E process as a National M&E Policy. Policy makers need to be engaged at this level and at this time of change. Globally M&E is a vital tool and critical success factor in achieving budget implementation, infrastructure development and project sustainability.
6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following this presentation, the under-listed recommendations are made to ensure sustainable budget implementation:

1. Establish a legal framework through the instrumentality of the National assembly to strengthen the weak policies on M&E, institutionalize M&E as a vital component of all development plans and infrastructure projects.

2. Inclusion of sustainability component in all procurement plans, planning regulations for buildings and infrastructure projects should be mandatory particularly in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

3. Properly legislate and establish standards or a regulatory body to control and regulate the practice of M&E in Nigeria. Alternatively M&E should be developed as relevant competence by the already existing professional bodies in the built environment.

4. There should be a properly constituted advocacy for an enhanced enabling environment for Monitoring & Evaluation (National Monitoring & Evaluation polices and systems that will promote the demand for and use of M&E) for strengthening democratic governance during and after the Buhari-led administration by improving transparency, strengthening accountability relationships, building performance culture within the three tiers of government (Executive, Legislation and Judiciary) to support better policy making, budget decision making and implementation and sustainability of development.

5. Facilitate reduction in country risk through political stability, elimination of insurgency and all forms of insecurity.

6. Strengthening and enforcing institutional and regulatory reforms particularly laws that are not investor-friendly.

7. Monitoring and evaluation procedure established in all ministries, departments and Agencies to be manned by trained M & E experts, regulated by the national policy mentioned above.
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