

Projects Monitoring and Evaluation – Issues and Challenges – A Case Study of DRG Funded
MDG Projects and Programs 2008 – 2010 in Borno State

BY

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ABSTRACT:

Clients generally are confronted with basic economic challenge of allocating scarce resources to numerous competing demands.

Government at all levels including Quasi Governmental Organizations and Agencies are contending with many pressing issues that are yearning for the somewhat limited resources.

Business Organizations need to finance Production, Marketing, Research and Development and other functions to ensure profitability and sustained growth. Provisions must also be made for expansions by embarking upon capital projects development.

In the above mentioned circumstances and many others, sourcing for fund is difficult and whenever accessed, it is at a high cost, particularly in an underdeveloped economy like ours. Consequently, Clients insist on getting values for money. Projects must be conceptualized, designed and executed within approved budget, timeline and in accordance to specifications.

Progresses of Projects and Programs must be tracked against funds disbursed to ensure effective and efficient application and utilization. In order to achieve this all important goal, Monitoring and Evaluation is a veritable tool available to professional service providers. Monitoring and Evaluation is aimed at tracking Projects and Programs with a view to delivering desired measurable results against prior set benchmarks. It could also be used to discuss outcomes and beneficiary impact assessment of Projects and Programs, especially in the social service sector.

The writer wishes to share with the participants the experiences gained while serving as Private Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant for MDG 2009 – 2011 in Borno State. Due to constrains of time and space however, the paper will be restricted to 2008 intervention during which several Projects and Programs were covered in critical sectors such as Education, Youth, Health, Agriculture, Environment, Capacity Building and Women Affairs respectively.

Key words: Monitoring, Evaluation, Tracking, Impact, Projects.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Al-Maktoum (2013) “When Governments evolve and develop services to make people’s lives easier, they contribute to their comfort and happiness. When Governments create opportunities for people, this makes them happy”. For any Government to achieve comfort and happiness to her citizens, sound economy is basic enabler. Yet Onyeiwu (2011) opines that “economic development is anchored on adequate infrastructural provision”. Among enablers for high impact mega infrastructure projects are collective vision, creativity, right costing and diligent monitoring and evaluation during implementation. FGN projects such as 2nd Niger Bridge, 4th mainland bridge recently embarked upon by Lagos State Government and Dangote Oil Refinery are sure stimulants for economic growth and development. Government should thus continue paying more attention to infrastructure such as Schools, Hospitals, Roads, Bridges, Water and Power Supply, Rails and Air transportation, providing of enabling environment for housing, environmental sanitation and drainages etc. Capital projects rank upto 30% of FGN 2016 budget and must be diligently implemented. Similarly, profit making companies interested in profitability and sustained growth and development must continue investing on capital projects and programs and research and development efforts.

In all the instances cited above and many more, Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) becomes imperative. According to IPDET (2007), Monitoring is a continuous process of collecting and analyzing information and comparing actual results to expected results, while Evaluation is an assessment of planned, ongoing or completed intervention to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability. Monitoring could therefore be said to track actual performance against what was planned or expected according to predetermined standards or specifications. M & E is a veritable tool available to Politicians and Governments to ensure real delivery of dividends of democracy. In addition to tracking performance, it measures the actual impact on the beneficiaries against planned. The concept covers the entire intervention cycle including inputs, activities, outputs, outcome and impacts.

The Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors is at the forefront of campaigns on the necessity for appropriate costing of Capital Projects for optimum value creation to endanger sustainable national development. The effort is more urgent and important now than ever because of the dwindling oil revenue occasioned by drop in production and crash in prices at the International Market. M & E will unravel the “whys” of not meeting set targets and objectives and proffer solutions in order to put schemes back on track. By organizing this Workshop the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors is contributing in no small measure to building capacities of officers and personnel saddled with the responsibilities of capital projects budgeting and implementation.

Meanwhile, Government should give more serious consideration to alternative Projects financing such as Public Private Partnership and private financing as being done in other climes, to cushion the effects of the dwindling oil revenues.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF MDG DRG FUNDED PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Millennium Development Goals (OSSAP-MDGs) encapsulated the following indices as at the year 2000

1	Population under poverty (Million)	39.07
2	Literacy rate of 15-24 years olds (%)	64.1
3	Ratio of girls to boys in Primary Schools (girls per 100 boys)	78
4	Infant mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	81.38
5	Under 5 mortality rate (per 1000)	183.75
6	Maternal Mortality ratio	704
7	HIV prevalence among 15 – 24 years old pregnant women	5.4%
8	Carbon dioxide emission (per capital)	4799
9	Proportion of total population with access to safe drinking water (%)	54
10	Proportion of total population with access to basic sanitation (%)	42.9
11	Per Capita official development assistance to Nigeria (US \$)	1.47
12	Debt services as percentage of export of goods and services	9
13	Private sector investment (US \$ Millions)	75
14	Internet access (%)	0.1

Source: MDGs Nigeria Information Kit, 2007

In order to reverse the above unfavorable indices, Nigeria in conjunction with other members of the International Community in September 2000 in New York, USA agreed upon series of 8 time bound MDGs. The adoption of the Millennium declaration as development strategy posed

serious financial dilemma to Government and People of Nigeria. In response, the Government created a Virtual Poverty Fund (VPF) in 2005 which was followed with Debt Relief Gains (DRG). The Government established the OSSAP on MDGs to oversee the implementation of the Program.

Overcoming the challenges highlighted in the Table above requires efficient and effective utilization of resources. That concern gave birth to the M & E component of the implementation strategy of the MDGs Program. The M & E component ensures tracking; monitoring and evaluating DRG funded MDGs Programs, thereby delivering measurable results.

M & E exercise of the year 2008 DRG funded MDG Projects and Programs took off in November, 2009 following a Workshop held at Hamdala Hotel, Kaduna.

MDG ended in 2015 and was since replaced with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

3.0 MDG/DRG PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS 2008 IN BORNO STATE

MDG/DRG Projects and Programs 2008 in Borno State could be categorized into five broad sectors as follows:

- 1) Youth empowerment and Poverty eradication
- 2) Education
- 3) Gender equality
- 4) Health and environmental sanitation
- 5) Agriculture

Quickwins was used as a strategy of fast tracking the impact of the above five sectors and would be discussed in some details because of its relevant to the Professionals in the built environment.

Objectives

The whole essence of the M & E exercise as stated earlier was to measure the performances against set plans, targets and objectives. The following were the sectoral objectives of the interventions as provided by OSSAP-MDGs in 2008.

Education

1. Universal Primary Education
2. Eliminates gender disparity in primary and secondary education
3. Improve academics infrastructure and
4. Enhance access to quality Education in Nigeria.

Health

1. Combating malaria
2. Combating HIV/AIDS
3. Strengthening the FMOH's internal capacity to track and carry M&E of MDGs policy and plan
4. Improving access to routine immunization
5. Improving access to maternal and child health care
6. Improving access to secondary and Tertiary referral, Maternal and child health care
7. Training of Nurses, Midwives Doctors and Health Workers including Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) on Life Saving Skills (LSS), Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC), Family Planning (FP) and Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI)
8. Procurement and distribution of drugs, ORT solutions, dressing etc and
9. Combating Tuberculosis

Environment

The main objectives of the environment include provision of safe drinking water to the rural dwellers as well as provide enabling environment for community development for supporting the rural water supply program.

Youth Empowerment and poverty eradication

1. Halved between 1990-2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day
2. Halved between 1990-2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Quickwins

1. Achieving universal Primary Education
2. Eliminate gender disparity
3. Improve academic Infrastructure
4. Enhance access to quality Education
5. Provision of safe drinking water to rural dwellers
6. Provision of enabling environment for community development by supporting rural water supply scheme

Projects and Programs

Comprehensive list of the Projects and Programs including their locations may not be necessary here due to time and space concerns, but the group profiles are as tabulated below:

S/N	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TOTAL NUMBER
1	Poverty Eradication Projects/Programs	50
2	Construction of Classroom Blocks	26
3	Provision of Classroom Furniture	26
4	Education Books and Teaching aids	12
5	Boreholes (Hand Pumps, Motorized and Solar powered)	25
6	Training of youth Corp members	27
7	Youth empowerment Programs (Agriculture and Cooperatives)	86
8	Roll back Malaria and Health related Programs	38

Source: M & E Mid-Term Report of 2008 DRG funded Projects/Programs in Borno State

4.0 THE M & E TEAM

In order to draw more precisely from the competencies of each set of service providers, the Government in its wisdom engaged the services of what they chose to refer to as a Private Sector Consultant (PSC) and a Civil Society Organization (CSO) to work as a team in each State and FCT and are jointly referred to as the State Team (ST). Our firm Kalabal Associates was engaged as the PSC while Global Agenda for Total Emancipation (GATE) were the CSO. The Teams in the 36 States of the federation including FCT were trained on teamwork and expected deliverables.

The PSC were involved more in the quantitative aspects of the exercise, examining project records, plans, reports and documents and drawing comparisons between expectations and actuals. The exercise involved taking physical measurements to prepare value of progresses achieved and obtaining vital information from the project implementation teams, all with a view to ascertaining factual results. It could be recalled from our discussion under Projects Profile above that not all projects and programs are building or engineering related. Programs such as roll back malaria, polio vaccination, HIV/Aids campaigns, social safety nets, capacity building for English, Mathematics and Science teachers etc cannot be adequately discussed by Quantity Surveyors or other professionals in the built environment. The PSC team therefore includes sector specialists such as Health practitioners, Educationists, Sociologists etc to compliment the distinctive core competencies of the Professionals in the built environment. The PSC Team carried out their duties by examining records, inventories, supplies, distribution, and so on which are all quantitative in nature. They monitor the level of physical completion/quality delivery of the discrete projects and services.

The CSO on the other hand dwelled more on the qualitative aspect of the exercise. They ascertained inputs leading to impacts with combination of tools. The various tools will be discussed in more details under methods of data collection. The CSO majorly undertook beneficiary impact assessment of the interventions.

5.0 SOURCES AND COLLECTION OF DATA

Sources and collection of Primary Data

For the PSC, the primary sources of data as hinted elsewhere were obtained by examining project records, plans, reports, other documents, field visits and surveys and physical measurements.

The CSO on the other hand generated data through combination of the following tools:

- 1) Observation of service provisions in action (direct and indirect)
- 2) Interviews of users and providers (key informant interview or in-depth interview)
- 3) Focus group discussions
- 4) Case studies of users with special outcome

Sources and collection of Primary Data

Both PSC and CSO obtained relevant secondary data from Borno State based Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), including National Poverty eradication Program; Federal Ministries of Environment, Health, Education, National Youth Service Corps, Borno State MDGs Project support Unit and Quickwins State Consultants.

Data collected in the above instances were of both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative data were meant to establish in measurable terms, the number of projects and their respective of level of completion, quality assurance etc. While the qualitative data dealt with generating in-depth analysis of the projects and program, so as to gain better insight into specific project input, activities, output, outcome and impact. Qualitative data also strived to elicit data on beneficiary impact assessment of the 2008 MDG DRG funded projects and programs

Data so collected in the manner described above were processed in the Offices and the resultant information sent to the National Monitoring and Evaluation Team (NMET) on some purposely designed Templates to ensure uniformity.

The State Team visited all the projects and programs locations throughout Borno State. Visits were paid to all the MDAs and obtained secondary data before compiling the respective Reports (Preliminary, Interim and Final).

6.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The result of the findings from the ST was prepared and presented in accordance with the format issued by the NMET. Discussions were presented along thematic areas covering objectives, targets, findings and presentation of results. Due to space consideration, abridged findings/results of Quickwins are presented below to serve as practical guides only:

1. Objectives

- a. Achieving universal Primary Education
- b. Eliminate gender disparity
- c. Improve academic Infrastructure
- d. Enhance access to quality Education
- e. Provision of safe drinking water to rural dwellers
- f. Provision of enabling environment for community development by supporting rural water supply scheme

2. Targets:

- i. The Target of the sector was to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of Primary education thereby increasing the literacy level of the society.
- ii. Halved by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

3. Projects/Programs

For convenience of analysis and presentation, projects under quickwins were classified as tabulated hereunder:

S/N	Project/Program Description	Coverage (LGAs)
1	3- Classroom Blocks with VIP Toilets	21
2	Supply of Classroom Furniture	18
3	Supply of Primary School Books and Teaching Aids	9
4	Hand Pump Boreholes	10
5	Motorized Pump Boreholes	12
6	Solar Pump Boreholes	3
7	Construction of Computer Centers	2
8	Supply of Furniture to Computer Centers	2
9	Supply of Computers and Accessories to Computer Centers	2

Source: M & E Mid-Term Report of 2008 DRG funded Projects/Programs in Borno State

4. Progress, findings and results

This section was developed following processing of the field data obtained in the manner described under Data Collection

4.1 level of completion

As at the time of preparing the final Report, the level of completion of the Projects were computed and averaged as in the table below:

S/N	Project/Program Description	Coverage (LGAs)	Level of Completion (%)
1	3- Classroom Blocks with VIP Toilets	26	85
2	Supply of Classroom Furniture	18	90
3	Supply of Primary School Books and Teaching Aids	9	90
4	Hand Pump Boreholes	10	85
5	Motorized Pump Boreholes	12	75
6	Solar Pump Boreholes	3	40
7	Construction of Computer Centers	2	30
8	Supply of Furniture to Computer Centers	2	0
9	Supply of Computers and Accessories to Computer Centers	2	0

Source: M & E Mid-Term Report of 2008 DRG funded Projects/Programs in Borno State

In addition to the above, the ST discussed, analyzed and drew conclusions between progresses made against funds disbursed.

Out of the 26 Classroom Blocks with VIP Toilets, our Team was able locate and monitor 24. 3 were already put to use without waiting for the ceremonial commissioning. Quality were adjudged to be satisfactory

All Classroom Furniture were supplied to the central Warehouse, awaiting distribution to Schools upon completion. 3 sets were already put to use.

All Primary School Books and Teaching Aids were confirmed to have been supplied to the Central Store

Out of the 21 Hand Pump, 12 motorized and 3 Solar powered Boreholes, 18 Hand Pumps and 9 motorized pump Boreholes were completed. Our findings further revealed that all the Hand Pump Boreholes were put to use, but conversely all motorized Boreholes were securely locked awaiting formal commissioning. Construction of Solar powered Boreholes were at 40% completion level

4.2 impact of the intervention

Our findings overwhelmingly revealed that the Quickwins segment of the intervention in Borno State was a tremendous success and impacted positively on the lives of the beneficiary communities.

Please note the following:

- 1) A typical M & E Report should include glossary of terms and list of abbreviations to make it reader friendly.
- 2) A typical M & E Report should include Executive summary.
- 3) Use of graphs and charts to clarify salient points are encouraged.
- 4) A typical M & E Report should be supported with rich Project pictures gallery.

7.0 CHALLENGES/LESSONS LEARNT

The following were some of the challenges faced while undertaking the exercise and you may find them useful in your future assignments:

- a. Inadequate needs assessment and community participation was noted as a major challenge in the beneficiary communities assuming ownership of interventions.
- b. There were observed lower quality works and standards due mainly to inadequate supervision by Project Consultants, particularly in locations remote from the State Capital.

- c. Inadequate gender mainstreaming from the onset of project planning and conceptualization. This hampers achieving overt positive gender impact of the interventions.
- d. Accessing NAPEP beneficiaries on some customized programs proved very difficult as either the contact numbers on the data base were out of order or had relocated from their recorded contact addresses.
- e. Reporting channels were online onto the web portal. Some programs were impossible to be uploaded as they were not appropriately coded.
- f. There was inadequate internet connectivity. This constraint was critical as the entire exercise was internet dependant and driven.
- g. The ST noted at various locations that there was inadequate information on points of claiming allowances by NAPEP beneficiaries.
- h. Multiple components of a given Project or Program should be awarded simultaneously to ensure that the facility is put to use immediately upon completion.
- i. The ST faced challenges posed by inadequate security and accessing Projects at difficult terrains.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the M & E assignment in Borno State, we recommend to following to ensure that the set targets and objectives were accomplished:

- 1) There should be in place an institutionalized system of continuous and sustainable M & E of Government projects and Programs.
- 2) There should be more intensive supervision by the project consultants particularly projects in remote locations from the State Capital.
- 3) Strategic projects and programs planning should be strengthened with particular reference to scope, time-scale and financing cycle.

- 4) After articulating workable plans, monitoring program must be reinforced. Actual progresses and resource utilization should be checked against plans and remedial measures promptly taken.
- 5) There should be needs assessment and sensitization plans as integral part of project planning and designs to ensure that the benefitting communities buy in and assume ownership of the interventions.
- 6) Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that contact information (telephones and addresses) must be periodically updated to ensure that participating members are always within reach.
- 7) Government should do more in deepening internet accessibility to the citizenry.
- 8) There should be a better coordination between Federal MDAs, their State Offices and the State MDAs to enhance greater understanding and collaboration.
- 9) There should be conscious effort at mainstreaming gender especially the female at all project and program cycles.

We also wish to add the following:

- 10) Professionals in the built environment should assess any given M & E assignment on its merit and recruit other relevant experts and specialists to compliment noted competency gaps.
- 11) Aspiring M & E practitioners should continually update their knowledge and skills with a view to imbibing best practices in the field.

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