

EXPLORATION OF STAFF PERCEPTION ON MONITORING PRACTICES IN COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL ASSISTED PROJECTS IN MBALE DISTRICT

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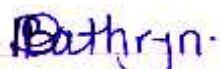
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DECLARATION

I Bigala Cathryn, declare that my thesis is original and has never been submitted for any award in any University.

BIGALA CATHRYN



.....25th/03/2025.....

Signature

Date

APPROVAL

I confirm that the thesis meets the requirements and hereby approve it for examination.



25th MARCH 2025

.....

.....

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother Mrs. Betty Bigala, my husband and to my children who gave me support in making sure that I fulfill my dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I glorify God for enabling me to achieve my goal. I thank my supervisor, Mr. Martin Kabanda, who supported and guided me to the completion of this work. I give gratitude to Dr. Jeremy Waiswa who guided me during the writing of this thesis. I appreciate my classmate Mr. Daga Denish for the ideas we shared during our academic journey. I also give thanks to the School of Social Sciences leadership at Uganda Christian University for offering me technical support which include corrections and reference to sources. This transformed me with courage, academic writing and further reading.

ABSTRACT

The study explored staffs' perceptions on monitoring practices in organisational performance, with close reference to Compassion International projects in Mbale. The main objective of this study was to explore staffs' perceptions on monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects. The specific objectives were: To examine the various monitoring practices in Compassion International projects and to explore staffs' perceptions on the effectiveness of monitoring practices of Compassion International projects in Mbale. The study employed a case study research design, qualitative approach, reviewed relevant literature on the subject basing on objectives and applied the control theory to explore monitoring practices and effectiveness in Compassion International projects in Mbale. The researcher used purposive sampling where the respondents were chosen because of their roles and knowledge about the topic. As a result, the researcher interviewed 10 out of 12 respondents. The findings indicated that monitoring plans significantly contribute to overall organisational performance but Compassion International projects do not intentionally plan, document and use monitoring practices to record the effect of programs and inform them on future interventions. The study recommends that Compassion International projects in Mbale need to intentionally plan, document and utilise monitoring practices for the success of their programmes. The study concludes that monitoring should not be seen as a donor requirement or activity based but should be incorporated in interventions because it enhances program effectiveness and performance.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 General Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.1.2 Historical Background.....	1
1.2 Theoretical Background.....	3
1.3 Conceptual Background	5
1.4 Contextual Background	5
1.5 Problem Statement	7
1.6 Objectives of the study	8
1.6.1 General Objective.....	8
1.6.2 Specific Objectives.....	8
1.7 Research Question	9
1.8 Justification of the study	9
1.8.1 Significance of the study	9
1.8.2 Scope of the study	10
1.8.3 Content Scope	10
1.8.4 Geographical Scope	11
1.8.5 Time Scope	11
1.9 Definition of terms	11

CHAPTER TWO	12
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.0 Introduction	12
2.1 Theoretical Framework	12
2.2. Review of related literature	14
2.2.1 The monitoring practices in Compassion International projects	14
2.2.1.1 Who does Monitoring Practice.....	15
2.2.2.2 What tools or methods are used for monitoring.....	15
2.2.2.3 Where does it take place and sources of data collection	15
2.2.2.4 When does it take place and the frequency of monitoring activities	16
2.2.2.5 Why monitoring is done	16
2.2.2 Staff perception on effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects.....	19
CHAPTER THREE	24
METHODOLGY	24
3.0 Introduction	24
3.1 Research Design.....	24
3.2 Study Population	24
3.4 Sample Size.....	25
3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sampling techniques	25
3.5.1 Sampling procedures.....	25
3.6. Sampling techniques	25
3.6.1 Purposive sampling.....	25
3.7 Data/General Collection Tool.....	26
3.7.1 In-Depth Interview	26
3.8 Data Collection Procedure.....	26
3.9 Pre-Testing of Data Collection Tools.....	27

3.10 Trustworthiness of Research Tools.....	27
3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation Plan.....	27
3.12 Ethical Considerations	28
CHAPTER FOUR	29
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	29
4.0 Introduction	29
4.1 Response Rate.....	29
4.2.1 The monitoring practices implemented by Compassion International in Mbale projects	30
4.2.2 Staff perception on effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects	39
CHAPTER FIVE.....	50
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	50
5.0 Introduction	50
5.1 Discussion of key findings on monitoring practices implemented by Compassion International in Mbale projects	50
5.2 Discussion of key findings of staff perception on effectiveness of monitoring practices in Mbale projects	52
CHAPTER SIX.....	58
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	58
6.1 Conclusions	58
6.2 Recommendations	59
6.3 Future Research.....	61
REFERENCES	62
APPENDICES.....	67
Appendix one: Interview guide	67
Appendix Two: Ethical Consideration	70

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CI	:	Compassion International
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
NIMES	:	National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy
OECD	:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMAU	:	Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit
NDP	:	National Development plan
ILP	:	Investment Learning Platform
ILO	:	International Labor Organisation
CDO	:	Child Development Officer
UNCST	:	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
ICP	:	Implementing Church Partner
PF	:	Partnership Facilitator
CSP	:	Child Sponsorship Program
CSP	:	Child Survival Program
CDSP	:	Child Development Survival Program
LDP	:	Leadership Development Program
PYD	:	Positive Youth Development
WASH	:	Water and Sanitation Hygiene
CDPR	:	Child Development Progress Reports
CIV	:	Complementary Intervention

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 General Introduction

Modernisation and the need for accountability has caused a number of organisations in the world to embrace regular improvements when implementing projects. This is done for purpose of increasing performance. As a result, organisations have prioritized investing in monitoring so as to register project success and performance. Compassion International projects in Mbale are not any different because they also operate in an environment where demand for results sometimes forces them to merely report so as to fulfill donor requirements.

It is interesting to understand the impact of the heavy budget of monitoring to the performance of the projects under compassion international Mbale. The research, therefore, investigated the roles and effect of monitoring practices on Compassion International projects.

This chapter therefore, covered the background, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, significance and justification.

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.2 Historical Background

Monitoring has a long history that dates back to ancient times and has reflected pattern shifts in organizational management (Nyonje, Ndunge, & Mulwa, 2012). The 1950s saw a great emphasis on resource management that was discreet, which

reflected the era's social scientific movement (Rodgers & Williams, 2006). According to Schwandt & Burgon, (2006) monitoring at that time tried to focus on engagement while including participants in an evaluation process that shaped consensus.

According to Alcock, (2009); Armstrong & Baron, (2013), explains that many organisations think that monitoring is a condition set by donors rather than as a management tool for monitoring performance and ensuring that implementation is followed up and is according to set out objectives. Donors need to know if funds are used for intended purpose, but the most important purpose is for the organisations to use monitoring to assess their performance and device how to improve. Naidoo, (2011) states that effective organisational monitoring strengthens and informs management during decision making because it is all about having data that is provable, (Maddock, 2009; Roza, 2013).

The National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (NIMES) was created in 2004 as a basis for integrating monitoring systems already in place from different ministries in government, departments, and sectors in order to minimize replication of effort, improve the appropriateness and value of data produced, and equip decision makers with information which comes from monitoring practices, (Booth and Nsabagasani, 2005). NIMES was developed for purpose of supporting key stakeholders to access timely information which is used for planning and implementation of policies and frameworks such as the National Development Plan (NDP), and improving Uganda's ability to register progress using monitoring tools. According to the Paris Declaration, governments should be responsible for evaluating performance and

applying assessment findings to improve decision-making within the public sector, which Booth and Nsabagasani (2005) also confirm that it is an important practice.

As stated by Teresa, (2005) over the past 15 years, many governments have changed their budgeting and management practices from mere inputs to results and outcomes. Accordingly, the need for better monitoring capabilities has intensified to the point where it has been called a growing sector and a public benefit so that donors and governments can give accountability for the funds received. Leeuw (2001), notes that many organisations are unable to show tangible outcomes out of their interventions and that monitoring systems are important for policy formulation, program design, implementation and impact. Leeuw adds that monitoring systems help in holding development partners accountable for progress of a project.

1.2 Theoretical Background

This study explored staff perception of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale and it was guided by the control theory, which was first introduced by Norbert Wiener in 1948 within the field of cybernetics and later expanded by William T. Powers in 1973.

For many years, (Silva, 2021) says the control theory has guided top leadership of organisations, academics, Monitoring and Evaluation practitioners on research and equipped them with information about organisation. Silva notes that top management emphasize solitary monitoring indicators but this is insufficient when it comes to making decisions on strategy and directions. There is need to consider control theory as a guiding factor in monitoring and evaluation decisions. As a result of this guidance from control theory, management practices have been accepted as important tools to

help organisation top leadership and researchers in monitoring organisation performance.

The theory assumes that systems, including organisations, require continuous feedback to maintain control and achieve desired outcomes. It says that individuals and organisations operate by comparing their current state to a desired state and making adjustments based on feedback to reduce any discrepancies. In the context of Compassion International, Control Theory explains the role and effects of monitoring practices in the organisation.

The theory also assumes that since it is purposive and active at the same time, it helps in ensuring that control mechanisms are necessary in organisations for example targets, which help in guiding program practices. (Davies, et al, 2015) note that Control Theory addresses plans, assumptions and processes in an organisation which contribute to the intended outcome. It provides a direction which organisation top leadership, donors, stakeholders and staff use to explain strategies, plans, budgets within the context of implementation of activities, outputs and end result. The theory helps in explaining difficult challenges within an organisation.

Control Theory, according to (Chetty, 2016), helps in sustaining the performance management system by defining forms of control between the organisation and the systems within.

According to control theory monitoring practices, planning and performance help with relating an organisation's approach and performance evaluation. This brings about relationship between planning, performance and desired outcomes.

1.3 Conceptual Background

The key dimensions of monitoring system include planning and implementation, training and quality assurance mechanisms. Development programs, according to oecd.org, carry out interventions in a variety of fields, such as: education, health, prevention of domestic violence, education, child protection, and livelihood, strengthening collaborations to support the overall growth and well-being of children, their families, and communities. Monitoring is about regular gathering of data to prove that program implementation has the following elements: planning, strategy, activities, inputs and outcomes. This is in line with the one of UNDP which states that monitoring is a continual activity that mainly informs management, donors, government and other stakeholders about project implementation and performance. Monitoring helps with fundamental management and accountability and compares actual performance to the original design's expectations or plans.

Systems for monitoring progress, analyzing data, and producing reports on the results of programs' goals are systematic ways that can help businesses make decisions and foster learning and innovation. Performance is the progression toward achieving goals. As a result of emphasis on results and monitoring, UNDP observes that organisations now give priority to impact, sustainability, ownership of projects by communities and results.

1.4 Contextual Background

Compassion International is a development Christian founded child focused organisation which works with churches to release children from poverty in Jesus' name. The centres at the churches where programs are implemented are called projects. It was established in 1952, to work with evangelical churches all over the world to release children from poverty in Jesus' Name (New Vision Report, 2016). In Uganda a total number of 173,741 children have benefited from the program since 1980 and the organisation now works with 534 churches as of July 2022 (Compassion

Report, 2022). The systems of the organisation and training team give emphasis to program monitoring, assessment, evaluation, accountability, resource mobilisation and learning in Compassion International projects to achieve its global strategy and objectives as well as quality in its programmes (C.I Accountability report, 2020).

According to Bryant & Robertson, (2022), although monitoring practices vary from organisation to organisation, integration of it within the organisation system should be given priority.

Monitoring should be regarded as a tool which management can use to track progress during program implementation and solve challenges; unfortunately, it is considered as a way of reporting to donors how funds have been utilized. This is compounded with pressure for accountability that organisations all over the world face from government, media, and other civic organisations to hold them accountable for the funds received, (Machuka, 2019). Development organisations need to use monitoring to check their performance in their core areas for example Compassion International projects need to use it for follow up of progress and success in child survival, disaster management, health, education and skills program (Garbutt, 2013). According to Draghici, A. et al, (2014), analysis at top management levels is meaningful and informed when monitoring is used because it helps them to have basis of interpreting results for application and organisational performance.

In addition to the above, the (ILP) Investment Learning Platform (2014) notes that if organisations seek improvement in their program performance, then they should consider monitoring as a strategic management function which helps them to determine progress and success in their investment, identifying implementation challenges, and noting positive or negative effects on the program. It is important to

note that participation in the development of monitoring systems by everyone in the organisation is vital. This brings about ownership and accountability within the organisation. However, this is not enough because the organisations need to include result framework to help in development of intended results, change and monitoring plans for collection of quantifiable and tangible data. This helps in ensuring that there is information in store which can be used for future reference for project decision (The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategic Plan, 2021).

1.5 Problem Statement

The use of monitoring tools is one of the most important aspects in an organisation. When it comes to monitoring as a tool for assessing interventions, (Segone et al., 2008) explain that it is important to consider effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability of program as opposed to mere compliance. Kusek (2014) emphasises that despite the fact that numerous studies have been conducted on monitoring practices, relatively few organizations still place a high level of trust on monitoring as a performance tool. Compassion International Uganda implements monitoring but several reports have consistently showed that there is low performance of their assisted projects for example, Compassion International Audit Report: 2024 noted that the projects are still lagging behind in achieving Spiritual Outcomes which is a programmatic target. The report says that there is no intentional monitoring and evaluation of discipleship programming. It is noted that monitoring tools such as academic progress reports for children, health screening reports were not up-to-date and some were missing. At the time of audit, there were no copies of

curriculum books and medical forms making it difficult to effectively utilise monitoring tools. A 2020 external audit report also noted that Compassion International Mbale projects do not capture their budget in the system, children registers are not updated on time and monthly reports are submitted for compliance purpose, making it difficult for monitoring to take place. The report also revealed that there is inconsistency in documentation during reporting. Therefore, despite known monitoring practices and challenges in Compassion International's program implementation, there is a lack of empirical investigation into how monitoring is actually conducted on ground in Mbale District, and how this affects project performance, particularly in achieving key outcomes like spiritual development. Thus, this study sought to examine the monitoring practices employed in Compassion International-assisted projects in Mbale District.

1.6 Objectives of the study

1.6.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study was to explore staff perception of monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To examine monitoring practices in enhancing performance in Compassion International projects in Mbale district?

2. To explore staff perception on the effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale district.

1.7 Research Question

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the various monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects?
2. What is staff perception on the effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale?

1.8 Justification of the study

According to Gorgens & Kusek (2009), organisations are compelled to respond to donor requests compared to meeting their outcomes. This pressure is caused by the need for more funding, overwhelming needs, accountability and delivery of quantifiable results from internal and external stakeholders. This study therefore, is appropriate because it will help fill the knowledge gap regarding importance of application of monitoring practices towards effective performance of Compassion International projects in Mbale.

1.8.1 Significance of the study

The project filled knowledge gap in academic research on organisation performance and monitoring.

The study is anticipated to help Compassion International and the projects it supports evaluate the impact of monitoring system on the organisation's performance and aid other child-focused organizations in understanding the role that monitoring plays in enhancing program delivery.

It provided comprehensive evidence to decision makers such as donors, government, top management of organisations, during planning, policy formulation, implementation of programs and resource allocation. It will also inform them about difficulties that can be faced during implementation of monitoring in programs.

This study will be used by academics to understand how monitoring plans and data collection affect organizational performance and how monitoring systems work especially in the achievement of outcomes.

1.8.2 Scope of the study

1.8.3 Content Scope

The study sought to explore staff perception of monitoring practices within selected projects in Mbale. It took qualitative approach focusing on how projects have embraced monitoring in Compassion projects using monitoring frameworks as Sita, (2022) agrees that monitoring helps to measure and ensure the success of an activity or program.

1.8.4 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in Mbale Cluster, Compassion International Assisted projects which are found in Mbale District, Eastern Uganda.

1.8.5 Time Scope

The study was conducted from April to July, 2024 with emphasis on the application of monitoring and performance in Compassion International projects in Mbale. The literature review incorporated a period of ten years, with focus on relevant scholarly articles published in this time frame. The time period provided enough material for learning, identifying gaps and areas for further research. This time frame also gave an opportunity to understand the current trends in monitoring practices in relation to organisation performance and success.

1.9 Definition of terms

Monitoring: This is a continuous function that provides data on how the company is doing in relation to its many goals and outcomes at any given moment.

Organisation performance: The extent to which organizational goals were met within the allotted time and financial constraints.

Monitoring plan: This is a document which provides a brief explanation of how a project's entire monitoring system operates.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The review of related literature from different scholars and writers, and the presentation of literature review in this chapter was guided by the order of the study objectives. The chapter also discusses the theory which guided this study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study explored staff perception of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale and it was guided by the control theory, which was first introduced by Norbert Wiener in 1948 within the field of cybernetics and later expanded by William T. Powers in 1973.

For many years, (Silva, 2021) says the control theory has guided top leadership of organisations, academics and Monitoring and Evaluation practitioners on research and equipped them with information about organisation. Management and institutions of higher learning emphasizing on solitary monitoring indicators was insufficient when it comes to making decisions on strategy and directions. As a result of this guidance from control theory, management practices have been accepted as important tools to help organisation top leadership and researchers in monitoring organisation performance.

The theory assumes that systems, including organisations, require continuous feedback to maintain control and achieve desired outcomes. It says that individuals and organisations operate by comparing their current state to a desired state and making adjustments based on feedback to reduce any discrepancies. In the context of Compassion International, Control Theory explains the role and effects of monitoring practices in the organisation.

The theory also assumes that since it is purposive and active at the same time, it helps in ensuring that control mechanisms are necessary in organisations for example targets, which help in guiding program practices. (Davies, et al, 2015) note that Control Theory addresses plans, assumptions and processes in an organisation which contribute to the intended outcome. It provides a direction which organisation top leadership, donors, stakeholders and staff use to explain strategies, plans, budgets within the context of implementation of activities, outputs and end result. The theory helps in explaining difficult challenges within an organisation.

Control Theory, according to (Chetty, 2016), helps in sustaining the performance management system by defining forms of control between the organisation and the systems within.

According to control theory monitoring practices, planning and performance help with relating an organisation's approach and performance evaluation. This brings about relationship between planning, performance and desired outcomes.

The study was about the role of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects and was supported by the theory because it corresponds with taking

corrective action and also ensuring that the results are stable in case data deviates from program goals in an organisation.

This theory was applicable to the study because it addresses the roles of monitoring practices which is the primary focus of this study. The respondents opined that monitoring practices help them to check on how they plan and perform in their program implementation. It helps them to identify the different monitoring practices and effects on their daily work.

The theory assumes that monitoring practices help in guiding on plans, processes and assumptions. It was relevant to the study because Compassion International projects use reports to inform their annual plans and budgets. It guided the study in how to analyse the relevance of the reports and other monitoring tools in achieving effects or change in Compassion's programming.

2.2. Review of related literature

The review of literature was done from authors on the subject of monitoring in relation to performance of organisations. The study of the literature helped to identify gaps in the study and advance knowledge on the various study objectives.

2.2.1 The monitoring practices in Compassion International projects

According to Segone, M. (2009) and Kusek & Rist (2004), monitoring practices can be better understood through the 5Ws framework, who, what, where, when, and why

which illustrates the chain of interactions within a monitoring system. This framework provides a comprehensive analytical approach for assessing and strengthening monitoring practices in organizations. It enables organizations to identify and address critical elements that influence the effectiveness and efficiency of their monitoring efforts. Therefore, the sections below outline how the monitoring practices apply to Compassion International projects in Mbale District.

2.2.1.1 Who does Monitoring Practice

Segone, M. (2009) and Kusek & Rist (2004) refers "who" to the individuals or groups involved in and affected by the project primarily stakeholders, beneficiaries, and donors. These actors are central to the project's existence and success, and their participation is essential in monitoring and evaluation processes. In the context of Compassion International projects in Mbale, monitoring is conducted by Project managers, coordinators and staff, who are responsible for ensuring that program activities align with set goals and standards.

2.2.2.2 What tools or methods are used for monitoring

The "what" according to Kusek & Rist (2004), addresses the tools and methods used for monitoring. In the context of Compassion International, the M&E staff design interview questions as the primary data collection method to allow to gather qualitative and quantitative insights and compare feedback from multiple respondents, this allows them to identify challenges and areas for improvement in the current monitoring practices, thus contributing to a better understanding of how monitoring influences organizational performance.

2.2.2.3 Where does it take place and sources of data collection

According to Segone, M. (2009), the "where" focuses on the location and sources of data collection. Compassion International-assisted projects are located in Mbale

District, Uganda, the Project managers, coordinators and staff from the National Office often visit each project sites to observe, interact and collect data on the progress of projects, ensuring that monitoring practices are relevant and aligned with operational realities.

2.2.2.4 When does it take place and the frequency of monitoring activities

The "when" according to Kusek & Rist (2004), apply to the timing and frequency of monitoring activities. In the context of Compassion International projects operate based on annual work plans and budgets, which are prepared at the start of the year. Monitoring is conducted through mid-year reviews, also referred to as mid-term evaluations, which assess progress and guide adjustments in programmatic interventions.

2.2.2.5 Why monitoring is done

Segone, M. (2009) asserted the "why" addresses the purpose and importance of monitoring. Understanding why monitoring is conducted helps uncover challenges in implementation and highlights opportunities for improved program management. In this case, monitoring practices in Compassion International were intended to ensure program relevance, improve service delivery, and make data-informed decisions to enhance performance and impact.

According to Patton (2009), all parts of the program that are needed to be in place are catered for in the planning of the monitoring system so as to identify challenges before and during program implementation for better decision making. Monitoring plans, he asserts that strengthen mechanisms for measuring program effectiveness by establishing goals, indicators and targets. Annual performance key targets and goals set benchmarks against which program success is measured, relevant indicators inform outcomes and the period that is set for achieving a target. Patton goes on to

say that one of the potential benefits of setting out objectives is what is measured is achievable. Nevertheless, Patton never considered the possibility that wrong measures can lead to achieving wrong results. As a result, it is critical to understand that, while setting targets helps in determining program success and results, it is also critical that significant program parties have the proof and examples needed to specific and realistic targets. As a result, the study investigated the relationship between monitoring plans and organisational success or performance.

The intentional and planned use of monitoring and evaluation tools helps facilitate program preparation and final reporting (Hallam, 2011). Though, one difficulty of such a method is that organisations focus more on measurables and ignore contextual analysis, which is a challenge in the practice of monitoring and evaluation practices. This does not consider plans for monitoring to foster stakeholder local obligation to the program development and implementation. According to Patton (2008), participation improves ownership and commitment to a project, brings interest in learning and helps improve on the organisation's training and acceptance of new ideas, thereby leading to the development of an organisation. In order to utilize the results from monitoring development, the beneficiaries' interest, views and influence need to be considered early enough and used to inform the monitoring and evaluation design. Patton (2009) goes on to say that if users of the monitoring practices understand the tools, they are more likely to participate in monitoring plans. This means that monitoring plans should begin with end users and this leads to which create pertinent questions like what was the gap during implementation. Patton (2008) goes on to argue that by designing a monitoring system in this manner,

stakeholders can accept the whole idea and practice of monitoring processes and this brings about commitment to program implementation and organisation success.

For proper planning, organisations need to have the right staff and rewards systems (Foresti, 2007). He adds that funding for publication of results is insufficient yet they would promote learning and accountability in utilization of monitoring for performance. However, most organisations do not give enough remuneration and resources to the monitoring department and the asks involved are considered to be cumbersome. This has a direct impact on the effective implementation of monitoring systems (Journal of Economic Literature, 1999).

Wun, (2019) adds that during the long haul, planning has an effect on the continued existence of the organization; this is due to market competition in a dynamic economic environment, though some barriers to implementation, such as lack of commitment, distract from successful implementation. Organizations must also emphasize strategic solutions over cyclic approaches to improve the effectiveness of performance monitoring plans (Hallam, 2011). Community growth programs ought to begin with considering monitoring process and how it can add value as well as defining learning requirements and citing anticipated use and users (Molander, 2010). This means that different implementation units' planning must be based on priorities and specifications.

2.2.2 Staff perception on effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects

Karl, (2008) asserts that while establishing monitoring structures, program staff need to consider utilizing the available organisational monitoring tools which are already being used in data collection. He continues by stating that monitoring reports can change if the results are below or above the targets. In this context, careful monitoring and reporting can assist in finding unique matters that must be subject to evaluation as the major objective (Gosling & Edwards, 2009).

A beneficial report is one that's focused on reputable and significant monitoring effort. The times and series of reporting are determined by the information provided as well as the donor agencies' obligation and its priority for approval usually specifies the frequency of the report. Olive (2002) asserts in the same study that "donor reporting" is frequently confused with "reporting." A beneficial report is needed and it is an important tool in monitoring practice. However, because of donor requirement, there are so many formats that organisations create and this contributes to the problem of carrying out monitoring just for the sake of it (Gray, 2009).

According to Bamberger, (2008) in most cases, the monitoring teams struggle to identify achievements because of frequent reports that are required by the donors. They even find it difficult to bring out accurate narration of outcomes. A four-year project, for example, can require an organisation to write 12 reports which sometimes may not provide detailed account of the success and challenges. This is because the donors demand reports frequently and so organisations submit to meet their needs. In as much as monitoring reports appear to be a burden for management

team, it is also worth noting that review process and reporting, in addition to donor prerequisites, are necessary tools, particularly big and highly funded projects (Naidoo, 2013). They help monitoring teams to understand the complexities of project implementation and reporting which are usually ignored.

Also, other necessary aspects needed in monitoring may include: presence of board members, advisors, review processes by different stakeholders, reports, anticipated project extension and any other report that can help in informing the practice. According to the International Labour Organization, there is evidence that organizations are beginning to try out various reporting formats such as executive summaries, photographic compilations, and video montages to aid monitoring (ILO, 2015).

According to Kusek and Rist (2004), "monitoring is an important practice which contributes to achievement of outcomes. Its tools are valuable tool and impact on project performance." Monitoring, as suggested by (Shapiro (2004)), aids in the review of the project's quality, the effect of a project against goals and plans, and the evaluation of planning and task lists. Monitoring's purpose is to improve program implementation in relation to input, activities, reporting, indicators and outcomes. (UNDP, 2002). Only by monitoring a project's performance can one determine how well it is to do (Wysocki and McGary, 2003).

Monitoring activities provide important guide to the leadership function and encompass the whole management systems right from operational to strategic levels especially regarding decision making (Cook, 2006). Monitoring practices are linked to

planning, implementation and accountability. They ensure that projects are implemented in a correct manner financially and programmatically. According to (Cook, 2006), this alignment to transparency can be connected to the fields of audit, conformance, and project performance management.

According to Cheng et al. (2007), a "high degree of examination and considered fair against clear guidelines and a criterion defined for a wide range of performance is expected from accountability-oriented monitoring. Monitoring encourages organizations to reflect and learn (PMI, 2006). When faced with assessment, organizations are expected to act more ego and open. This is not always the case because initiative learning in organizations is often difficult due to the complex range of incorporating data in organizations, in addition to the existing culture and practices that are already in the organisation (Preskill, 2004; PMI, 2006). According to Schwartz and Mayne (2005)'s appraisal of the achievements of reflection and learning, " tracking and assessing is a project planning technique that promotes substantial proof decision making by enhancing and giving better data and information." Verma (2005) agrees, declaring that monitoring serves as a useful and exceptional project management tool.

Monitoring is utilized by government to boost accountability, strengthen accountability, and boost efficiency, according to Wholey (2010), whereas systems for performance management establish outcome-oriented objectives and outcomes targets, track progress, induce improved results, and report progress to higher government levels and the community (Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2010). The

importance of the monitoring function, particularly its impact on organizational performance, cannot be overstated.

Monitoring contributes to evaluation, making it an essential component of the whole evaluation process. According to (Nyonje, Ndunge, & Mulwa, 2012), monitoring is a descriptive practice which provides data regarding state of intervention in regards to completion of the task targets and outcomes. In contrast, evaluation practice is an organised, systematic, objective assessment of ongoing and/or finalised projects with the goal of providing timely assessments of relevance/importance, efficacy and efficiency, as well as implementation process, impact, and overall progress. Monitoring practice is an important part of project implementation and leadership which involves promotion of successful project. It helps management to make informed decisions. (Nuguti, 2009).

Monitoring practices are inseparable from accountability and they lead to confirmation of completed tasks. According to (Cook, 2006), this connection with accountability and audit directly shows project transparency. Thus, according Cheng et al., (2007), accountability-oriented monitoring should include a "high degree of examination and organizational decision - making against clear guidelines and norms founded for a various performance level."

Monitoring enables organisations to reflect and learn (PMI, 2006). Once faced with evaluation, organizations are expected to be more conscience and transparency. However, this culture of transparency which is promoted by monitoring practices is not something that is easy to observe because not many people are honest. In case

management does not share information openly; the monitoring team may not work efficiently and this bring about lack of transparency which affects program performance. (Preskill, 2004; PMI, 2006). Kennerly and Neely (2003) also say that the context in which monitoring has to be carried out is very important. They explain that there is an effect in monitoring processes when there is no intentional learning. Organisations need to embrace learning so as to have successful monitoring process. According to Schwartz and Mayne (2005)'s assessment of such achievements of monitoring to learning and reflection, "monitoring" is a project planning tool that supports substantial proof decisions by enhancing and providing excellent data and information. Verma (2005) agrees, declaring that surveillance is a very precious and exceptional project management tool.

Monitoring practices are important because they are able to produce outcomes depending on context as mentioned in the above paragraph. Bamberger (2008) noted that there is likelihood of using monitoring practices for promoting shared learning and accountability. Gray (2009) also noted that apart from accountability, monitoring can help in promoting learning and innovation. The importance of monitoring in project performance cannot be overstated. According to Shapiro (2001), monitoring practices are important in singling out challenges and informing management about possible solutions in organisations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explored methodology used in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. It also covers the design and approach, targeted population, the study site, as well as the methods used for sampling and determining the sample size. Additionally, it explored the research methods employed, data collection tools and steps taken in gathering of data. The chapter also covered trustworthiness in data collection, a brief account of data presentation and analysis plus ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Design

The study was entirely qualitative and it used a case study research design. According to Bryman (2012) It is certainly true that exponents of the case study design often favour qualitative methods, such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing, because these methods are viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case. This research design was relevant to the study because it is an exploratory one, seeking to understand the entire monitoring practices, role and effects in Compassion International. Case study research design caters for in depth analysis of a phenomenon and so it is relevant to the study because the interview questions are probing in nature.

3.2 Study Population

According to Shukla (2020), study population refers to the collection or group comprised of units to which the study results are to be attributed. The population of the study included project staff at the Church level who work directly with the children who interact with monitoring tools and implement documented program outcomes. The study population included 12 staff as follows: six Child Development Officers, six Project Directors. The categories were selected because they are

charged with implementing Compassion International's objectives, plans, activities and achieving desired outcomes. They also form the technical team of the projects.

3.4 Sample Size

Taherdoost (2017) defines sample size as part of an evidence-based study whose aim is to arrive at conclusions about a population. The sample size was 12 project staff and they were chosen basing on their involvement in monitoring practices. This helped the researcher to examine if monitoring has been applied and contribute to performance in projects.

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sampling techniques

3.5.1 Sampling procedures

It is the process of selecting a group of people for a study so that they can represent the bigger picture or group from where they were selected (Ogula, 2015). The study employed non probability sampling because the nature of population did not require random sampling. The project staff as mentioned earlier are knowledgeable about Compassion International program monitoring tools, they were also located in defined Geographical areas for example in different projects which had physical locations and address and they are literate, able to read, record and answer questions.

3.6. Sampling techniques

3.6.1 Purposive sampling

It is a strategy used on key respondents or informants who have confidential and deep information about the subject being researched about (Oso and Onen, 2009). Using purposive sampling technique, the researcher selected respondents who have knowledge and their roles are related to the research topic, objectives and purpose. This kind of method of sampling according to Yoko and Onen (2015), assists a researcher in deciding who to include in the sample in order to apply expert

knowledge. The staff who included project directors and child development officers are responsible for program planning, implementation and reporting. The project director for example, is the overall accounting officer and so is privileged and knowledgeable about the subject of investigation. The child development officers are the ones who interact directly with the children and generate reports such as My Plan for Tomorrow, a tool used by the children to plan for their future. It is this tool that the projects use to track progress in children's milestone.

3.7 Data/General Collection Tool

3.7.1 In-Depth Interview

This is a data collection tool and technique used in qualitative research where a small number of respondents are presented with specific and open-ended questions which will attract elaborate response, Neale & Boyce (2016). In this study, the researcher developed interview questions from the objectives and research questions. The questions aimed at deriving answers leading to understanding of roles and effects of monitoring practices. Carrying out In-depth interviews with Compassion International project staff also helped to provide information on the effectiveness of monitoring practices on Compassion International projects.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher got permission to collect data from project leadership and individual staff through presenting to them the research ethics committee authorization letter and writing emails to them for consent.

3.9 Pre-Testing of Data Collection Tools

The interview guide was pre-tested before rolling it out to the respondents. The researcher tested its validity by selecting a small group of people from Mbale projects who are not part of the selected population. This was to ensure that the questions are easy for comprehension and are also relevant to the objective of the study. Six staff who include Child Development Officers were selected and given the interview questions to establish if they are direct and able to attract the goal of the research in terms of response.

3.10 Trustworthiness of Research Tools

Ensuring trustworthiness according to (Ahmed, 2024) is crucial in establishing the credibility and reliability of qualitative findings. This can be achieved through four elements or dimensions namely: credibility, dependability, confirmability and applicability. The study depended on credibility where the selected respondents were consulted thoroughly using open ended questions, giving the researcher opportunity to get detailed explanations, this also corresponds with applicability where the researcher has opportunity to transfer relevant findings to a given study as confirmability helps in elimination of biasness but rather giving opportunity to reflect on reality for example how monitoring practices are effective on organisation performance. This was also approved by my supervisor on how questions would generate responses as per research objectives.

3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation Plan

Data Analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. Researchers analyze for patterns in observations through the entire data collection phase (Savenye & Robinson, 2004). This study entailed the analysis of qualitative data. Qualitative data is non-numerical information which includes in-depth interviews, audio and recording.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

This refers to the integrity involved in conducting research to ensure that law and order is maintained (Hair, 2010). Issues frequently realized in ethics include among others: plagiarism, consents by relevant authorities before engaging in a research, use of faulty methods and procedures of data collection, and misleading authorship. The researcher ensured that all ethical issues are adhered to during the whole process of research. To ensure this, the researcher submitted the proposal and sought for permission from Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee. Data was collected in Uganda so the researcher sought for clearance from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). This clearance was done by Uganda Christian University's Research Ethics Committee which is authorized by UNCST. The researcher introduced herself to Compassion International, stating the purpose of the study in writing and making it clear that it is for study purpose only. The researcher kept the confidential information given by respondents with privacy and anonymity and highly detected cases of plagiarism. Both male and female respondents were involved to avoid bias based on gender.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter covered analysis, presentation and interpretation of data about monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale. Data was collected, presented, analysed and interpreted basing on two research questions for example: What are the various monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects? What is staff perception on the effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion projects in Mbale?

Following the research questions, data was collected using in-depth interview on monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects.

4.1 Response Rate

The target population was 12 staff but 10 interviewees responded. This means that 83% of the respondents participated in the study. Relying on Mugenda (1999), a 50% response rate is enough for making conclusion, 60% is good and over 70% is an excellent response for analysis and arriving at conclusion. Based on this assertion, the response rate was excellent. It also shows that the respondents were willing to take part in the study. Therefore, the researcher deemed the response rate sufficient to provide the necessary information for the research.

4.2.1 The monitoring practices implemented by Compassion International in Mbale projects

The study sought to establish the various monitoring practices implemented by Compassion International projects in Mbale. From interaction with the project staff, it is important to explain Compassion International model. Compassion International works with the church to implement its programs. They sign partnership agreements which are signed every five years. Each church which Compassion International works with is called an Implementing Church Partner (ICP) or Focal Church Partner. In an area, there are about 10-15 churches which are called projects. The 10-15 churches which hosts Compassion International programs and these are put in a cluster. The ICP has autonomy to note the critical needs of its participants guided by the four programmatic core areas. As a way of supporting, the church meet its goals Compassion adds other supplementary support projects (complimentary interventions) like income generating activities for caregivers, fees top up, shelter construction, periodic emergency relief food distributions, construction and furnishing of resource centres, provision of agricultural inputs, provision of bibles, funding and facilitation of spiritual enrichment programs like seminars and conferences etc.

The findings revealed that Compassion International Mbale projects engage in different programs. Respondent R5 explained that:

“For the last 30 years, we have been having sponsorship programs i.e., Child Survival Program, Child Development through Sponsorship Program, Leadership Development Program, various health programs. In everyday language, we offer palliative and curative care to our beneficiaries, shelter construction and renovation, skills and youth development programs, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS treatment and sensitizations. We also have child protection, agriculture, nutrition, food security, gender equality, women empowerment programs and education sponsorships”
(Respondent 5, 22 May 2024).

Respondent 3, who has served as a Project Director for 18 years in Compassion-assisted projects highlighted that Compassion International conducts several programs and these are clustered into four main aspects:

The various programs are clustered into; Physical aspect (sanitation and hygiene, growth monitoring, disease prevention and control, disaster management, HIV/ AIDS care and prevention, shelter construction, environmental protection and nutrition). We call them health intervention and that is why each project is required to employ a Child Development Officer in charge of health.

Cognitive aspect: formal education, livelihood skills, vocational skilling, career guidance, spiritual aspect: prayer, evangelism, and discipleship, social emotional aspect: mentorship, life skills, games and sports, communication, and correspondence. Here projects recruit a Child Development Officer in charge of Sponsor Donor Relations (CDO-SDR).

Relatedly, Respondent 7 who has served as CDO SDR for 6 years, mentioned that the various programs implemented by Compassion International projects include: Child sponsorship program; Complementary interventions; Education support; Health and nutrition support; Spiritual development; Disaster relief and Emergency response.

Responses were obtained using in-depth interview on monitoring mechanisms in place at Compassion International for the above programs. Respondent 2 explained that projects have performance monitoring and data collection on project activities, assessment of project performance, risk and audit tools such as financial reports, data privacy tools and leadership engagement tools like Pastors' letters to sponsors,

children's letters to sponsors. She said that they use these as their major mechanisms follow up program outcomes (*Respondent 7, 23 May 2024*).

According to Respondent 7, they are supposed to monitor children's development through tools such as My Plan for Tomorrow, which is a journal of a child's milestone in terms of program outcomes. This is filled in by the children and they also record their career aspirations. The respondent said that this is crucial because it is submitted to the National Office annually. However, according to respondent 7, the process is done so as to meet program deadlines which are required by the sponsors as opposed to measuring effect on performance. They never use this tool according to Respondent 7 to check on their performance.

"When Partnership Facilitators give us deadlines for submission of these tools, we call the children for a session and ask them to write or fill out parts which are still blank. This we do, so as to meet the deadline from national office. We never do it for purpose of checking our progress in a child's interaction with the program," said Respondent 6.

Response was also obtained from Child Development Officer (CDO) Finance, Child Development Officer in charge of Sponsor Donor Relations, Health and a Project Director who has worked for a period of 22 years on the various programs implemented by Compassion International. Respondent 9.

Respondent 1 mentioned that Compassion International produces a range of monitoring reports, including home visitation, school visitation, health screening, academic progress, and audit reports, among others. These reports are used interdependently to guide program interventions, design short- and long-term

programs, and inform corrective actions during implementation (Respondent 1, 21 May 2024). This is in agreement with the Control theory which says that systems, including organisations, require continuous feedback to maintain control and achieve desired outcomes. It says that individuals and organisations operate by comparing their current state to a desired state and making adjustments based on feedback to reduce any discrepancies.

They all agreed that Compassion International projects in Mbale have designed programs around four core areas, (interventions) cognitive, social emotional, physical and spiritual development of its beneficiaries where each one of them is considered as someone who is supposed to be developed to become fulfilled Christian adult.

The children are recruited at the ages of 0-5 and stay on the program till the age of 22. Respondent 9 alluded that these children's stay and participation in the program is monitored using children participation register where they are recorded every Saturday.

The study sought to establish the monitoring mechanisms in place at Compassion International for the above programs. Results were obtained from Respondent 7 who said that Compassion International projects do not have an independent monitoring unit /department and this in my opinion is the greatest missing link and a point that compromises quality and monitoring the use of these tools on project performance. The Monitoring mechanism is embedded in the general management design of compassion, through the Compassion representative who is called a Partnership Facilitator (PF), the great part of monitoring and also evaluation is entrusted to the

office of the PF. This has come with many challenges as the PFs are expected to be experts at everything many of them at times have no idea of the interventions they are meant to monitor. The PF is supported by the audit unit and another officer called Complimentary Interventions, headed by a specialist. In most cases these specialists are only by name but do not have the competence to monitor the effectiveness of the program interventions. Thus, most of the time attention is only fixed on how money has been spent not what it has been spent on and the impact of what the money has done” (*Respondent 7, 23 May 2024*).

The Complimentary Intervention specialist receives reports at the end of the project for example shelter renovation. Apart from completion report for the project which is written at the end of the shelter renovation, there is no intentional recording of effectiveness of this report to inform future shelter renovations.

The study findings on the various monitoring practices and programs in Compassion International Mbale projects show that there are clear programs and outcomes that are documented. However, monitoring practices still have some challenges as Respondent 2 revealed that:

“The team which is responsible for monitoring is not skilled enough to carry out the task effectively. A PF, for example, cannot always be competent in all fields and the CIV specialist in my opinion is only a specialist by titles because in most cases they focus on the budget yet the real purpose of monitoring is to make adjustment for attainment of results which is not observed. There is little engagement with external support system to support the monitoring function” (*Respondent 2, 23 May 2024*).

Compassion International projects in Mbale are required to report to the local government through Sub Counties. They do this through submission of reports. This is done in compliance with project and local government requirements but not as a means to measure organisation performance.

“I have never sat down with the Sub County Chief to discuss how our reports contribute to the success of the community. All we do is write reports and submit them yet they are supposed to inform our contribution to local government performance,” added Respondent 2.

The reports which various projects submit to the local governments are: monthly, quarterly and annual reports. Respondent 10 added that these reports are meant to help them improve in their program implementation but this is not the case.

“We are always asked by the PF if we have submitted the reports to the local government. We answer in agreement because we do it for compliance purpose. After all, this is to meet requirements by the government. We also do it for purpose of being included in government programs like Parish Development Model,”

Respondent 3 said that she has never been with the sub county to get feedback about their reports. “We do not know whether the reports are right or wrong. In fact, the only report that we can say contributes to our success is health report. Here, the health officer from local government comes to screen our children and gives us a report,”

Even with the above report, the study discovered that health reports are used to inform the project about how the children are doing in the health aspect as opposed to making recommendations for improvement of the programs.

The study aimed at identifying the various programs implemented by Compassion International in Mbale. The findings indicated that Compassion International is involved in a diverse range of projects. Respondent 5 also explained these projects, which include sponsorship programs such as CSP, CDSP, and LDP; various health programs, both palliative and curative; shelter construction and renovation; Positive Youth Development (PYD); WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) projects; HIV/AIDS treatment and sensitization; child protection initiatives; agriculture, nutrition, and food security programs and education scholarships.

Further insights were provided by Respondent 3, a Project Director with 18 years of experience in Compassion-assisted projects, who explained that Compassion International's programs are organized into four main categories: physical (including sanitation, hygiene, disease prevention, food security, HIV/AIDS care, shelter construction, environmental protection, and nutrition); cognitive (formal education, livelihood skills, vocational training, and career guidance); spiritual (prayer, evangelism, and discipleship); and social-emotional (mentorship, life skills, games, sports, communication, and correspondence).

Similarly, Respondent 4, a CDO with six years of experience, identified the key programs implemented by Compassion International as child sponsorship,

complementary interventions, education support, health and nutrition support, spiritual development, and disaster relief and emergency response.

The primary functions of a project monitoring practices include project management, accountability, and learning to enhance performance. While some systems may focus on only one or two of these functions, a comprehensive monitoring system must effectively serve all three—management, accountability, and learning—and is ultimately judged on its ability to do so. The study evaluated the functioning and achievements of the monitoring system in Compassion International projects in Mbale.

This is what Respondent 4 said during an in-depth interview:

"The monitoring practices are numerous and require significant vigilance, diligence, and consistency to achieve positive results. Although the tools are simple, easy to understand, and can be administered by anyone who is literate, their effectiveness is sometimes limited by competing priorities, time constraints, insufficient staff, and limited funds for implementing some recommendations" (Respondent 4, 22 May 2024).

Effective monitoring systems must include accountability mechanisms that ensure all project activities are tracked throughout the project cycle, from inception to completion. For example, monitoring individual child attendance can help determine whether more vulnerable participants, such as younger or poorer girls, drop out of the project at higher rates, or if those with lower attendance experience worse outcomes in the labour market. Respondent 6 emphasized this by noting:

"Our monitoring system is focused on activities as opposed to outcome. We, for example, need to use children attendance register to help us capture children progress or milestone,"

Respondent 8 added that there is need to establish an independent monitoring unit for their interventions. For specific interventions like water, income-generating activities, child protection, food security, health, spiritual should have an expert in monitoring to help record and follow up milestones which can inform project performance.

Respondent 1 said that the monitoring systems in Compassion International Mbale projects act ways of recording progress of projects.

"We have completion reports written about each child who finishes our program. The child also is required to write a departure letter which records how they have benefited from the program. This kind of accountability helps us to understand that there is milestone that we have accomplished in each child"

In summary, Compassion International projects in Mbale have activity driven monitoring systems which are used for tracking or recording program participation and activities and has made the projects to be relevant to the communities and other stakeholders. This is in line with the control theory which says that monitoring tools guide top leadership of organisations, and Monitoring and Evaluation practitioners on research and equips them with information about organisation. However, respondents interviewed explained that there is need to give monitoring systems attention because staff do not use them diligently because of competing priorities, lack of

expertise and training. The study also revealed that Compassion International projects use monitoring tools for recording activities instead of using them to assess performance.

4.2.2 Staff perception on effectiveness of monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects

The study discovered that monitoring practices are used and are effective in performance of Compassion International programming. Respondent 2 explained that: “The monitoring practices which we laid out three years ago have greatly influenced the way we do work for example we planned to follow up children using a tool called My Plan for Tomorrow. The only challenge is that we do not do this regularly but this has helped us to track growth and development milestones on the children. So, I really confirm that when an organisation plans for monitoring, it is actually planning for its performance. The challenge we have is the systematic and intentional use of these tools. We have the My Plan for Tomorrow tool but we do not use it for monitoring our progress yet this is a very important monitoring tool”. This is also similar to the Control Theory which addresses plans, assumptions and processes in an organisation which contribute to the intended outcome just like in Compassion projects.

Relatedly, Respondent 7 also said that the impact of monitoring plans cannot be underestimated:

“We have very good tools but we do not have the skills and appropriate personnel dedicated to use them and inform our performance. If we got such training and staff then our monitoring tools would link to our annual reports and this is how we would know whether we are succeeding or not”.

Similarly, Respondent 7 concurred, stating that “monitoring has helped us in financial management for example we know what we have spent, what we have and what we need. If it wasn’t for monitoring tools such as financial reports and analysis book, we would not have informed position on project finance.

The study determined that there is no intentional planned direction to record uniform effects of monitoring plans in all Compassion International Mbale projects. Response obtained from Respondent 6 showed that:

“The performance of Compassion International projects varies from church to church because of decentralized planning. Each ICP does its own plans depending on the needs assessments conducted. Therefore, this uncoordinated planning which varies from church to church greatly affects the synergy and shared learning which would help projects in a cluster. In most cases, each project hires staff without even considering the skills in monitoring yet that staff is expected to handle monitoring activities. The Partnership Facilitator, who represents national office also lacks the skills in monitoring. There are staff who focus on hardware interventions such as generating reports and filing them. Then, there are those who are interested in analysis. This lack of uniformity is a big challenge in monitoring effectiveness of these tools against performance,”

“The only challenge with our financial reports is that they are meant for balancing records as opposed to informing us what we are achieving in programs,” explained Respondent 7.

Respondent 1 agreed that the effect of monitoring practices of Compassion projects varies from church to church due to decentralized planning as earlier mentioned, but he added that recording of effect of monitoring on practice is still lacking. Projects perform so many activities but end up not writing or recording them down. with each Implementing Church Partner (ICP) creating its own plans based on needs assessments.

“We are the primary users of monitoring tools like monthly reports, children attendance register but in most cases we do not capture everything that we do in the projects. For example, when it comes to monthly reporting, we only report about the activities as opposed to impact. How then can we fully understand that we are making impact or not? Many of our children have completed the projects but we do not have concrete files showing where we came from with them up to when they exited the projects. We need to improve on recording impact of monitoring in our projects,”

The objective of the study was to examine the role of monitoring practices in Compassion International Mbale projects’ programs. Examining project reports involves assessing various aspects of an organization, such as employee performance, project management practices, policies, and identifying any challenges. Feedback from these reports provides valuable insights on what needs to be improved for better project outcomes. Key factors influencing performance include opportunities for

employees to stay informed about organizational concerns, regular and clear communication from top management regarding individual performance, and conducting meetings to address project-related issues.

Respondent 8 highlighted various types of monitoring reports produced by Compassion International Mbale which include:

Education Progress Reports: Focus on improving access to quality education and monitoring participants' academic performance. Children are expected to hand in their school term reports to the projects which are filed in their records.

Health and Nutrition Reports: Track health indicators, nutritional outcomes, disease prevention efforts, and access to healthcare services. The project carries out quarterly health screening for all children by a qualified medical staff. These reports are also filed in the children's file.

Child Protection Reports: Outline measures taken to ensure the safety and well-being of sponsored participants. There are routine child protection trainings done and reports are also filed in children files in a cabin.

Child Development Progress Reports (CDPR): Monitor individual participant development across four key aspects, helping sponsors understand the impact of their support.

Community Impact Reports: Assess the impact of projects on the community, such as water infrastructure and other developments. These reports are submitted to the sub county for accountability purpose.

Financial Accountability Reports: Emphasize financial transparency and accountability, giving sponsors/donors insight into fund utilization.

Program Evaluation Reports: Evaluate whether program objectives are met, identify areas for improvement, and measure long-term outcomes.

Respondent 6 said that with all the above reports, project leadership and Compassion International office staff rarely communicates with employees about good work performance or how far they have gone with program implementation.

“In most cases when auditors or PFs come to the projects, they come with the aim of fault finding. None of them sits with us to analyse reports or schedule of activities. This leads to lack of empowerment in monitoring which is a big challenge in Compassion International projects,”

“Compassion International projects’ monitoring tools are like government policies. They are written carefully and smartly but when it comes to implementation, there is no evidence at all. Yes, we do have those reports as I mentioned earlier but of what use are they to the program if we do not use them for monitoring our program implementation?”

However, challenges exist, as noted by Respondent 9: Top management only engages with employees when serious problems arise or to give new work instructions (Respondent 9, 23 May 2024). Project directors also expressed concerns about their tight work schedules, limiting their opportunities to discuss work with supervisors. They revealed that top management rarely holds meetings to discuss work-related issues, usually interfacing with employees only once or twice a year. This lack of

communication hampers the ability of project directors to provide effective feedback to their teams, leading to gaps in monitoring and quality control.

“I have been a project director for a number of years but each time the National Office calls me, it is about ‘firefighting’. We solve problems all the time. It is either a child who has not attended program activities or donor correspondence which has not come through. This kills the spirit of using reports to monitor our performance. I yearn for a day when I will be called to analyse reports for program effectiveness,” (Respondent 5, 23 May 2024).

Additionally, the frequent changes in program policies before actual implementation were cited as a challenge that affects the quality of reports and the ability to provide feedback. As noted earlier, Compassion International has good policies, reports and monitoring tools but Respondent 10 noted that these reports are adjusted frequently and so they have no impact in actual program effectiveness.

“When we were getting used to the new reporting template, another one was rolled out to help us in capturing children sponsor donor relations outcome. Why the frequent changes yet we haven’t even registered success of the present tool in program success? This frequent changes in monitoring documents and policies have greatly affected their usefulness in the program,”

Despite these challenges, the impact of monitoring reports on project performance was acknowledged by Respondent 8, who noted that monitoring reports have significantly contributed to the correct implementation of projects, ensuring that

target beneficiaries are reached, and appropriate interventions are made to achieve intended outcomes. (Respondent 8, 23 May 2024). She added that:

“In as much as our reports have contributed to program effectiveness, we do not do it intentionally. Our daily schedules do not allow us to sit down and analyse reports to inform our next cause of action in a program,”

Monitoring reports also play a critical role in promoting accountability within Compassion International. They ensure that program directors and implementers are held responsible for their actions, leading to more effective and efficient program implementation. Respondent 3 emphasized that monitoring reports help assess program impact and ensure accountability, with various types of reports contributing to this process (Respondent 3, 22 May 2024). However, concerns were raised about the focus of some reports, with Respondent 8 noting that:

“The reports produced by Compassion for their projects often emphasize financial accountability while neglecting other critical aspects of project direction. If a project is going to work with compliance in mind, then the real purpose of the tool is meaningless. We usually write financial reports for accountability but not proper program planning” (Respondent 8, 22 May 2024).

Respondent 8 added that with the limited feedback provided by Compassion to projects, monitoring reports are often given general attention as opposed to specific evaluations of project impact (Respondent 8, 22 May 2024).

Compassion International projects in Mbale have monitoring reports and they have a significant impact on the performance of the programs and activities. Some of the reports such as monthly, financial and annual reports help them to track progress and

go back to the drawing board for better planning and this promotes performance and success in the projects because they use informed data to make important decisions.

Regarding the roles of monitoring mechanisms in place, Respondent 2 said that monitoring tools help them to record several approaches used by Compassion International projects, including monitoring and data collection on project activities, assessment of project impact, risk management, financial monitoring, data privacy, and leadership engagement.

Another role of the monitoring tools in performance of Compassion International projects is that they help in recording of program activities using several reports which include: health report, monthly program report, financial report and children's register. These are compiled and submitted to the PF. Beyond the PF, projects cannot tell whether they have performed well or not. In this case, it becomes difficult for them to record the effect of monitoring (writing) these reports on their performance.

Respondent 9, who has 22 years of experience, emphasised that Compassion International's monitoring tools help in program design. For example, programs are designed around four core areas: cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and spiritual development after initial assessments before setting up a project. Each participant is viewed as a project to be holistically developed into a fulfilled Christian adult at the inception of the project. Implementing church partners have the autonomy to identify the critical needs of their participants, guided by these four programmatic areas using an assessment tool which is part of monitoring tools. Compassion supports these goals with supplementary projects such as income-generating activities for caregivers, fee top-ups, shelter construction, emergency food distributions, resource centre

construction, provision of agricultural inputs, bibles, and spiritual enrichment programs. The biggest concern raised by all the respondents is how these programs lead to their performance. The study also revealed that although these monitoring tools help in capturing program activities, they are never revisited by the project staff to inform their next planning cycle.

“We have all the tools available and they help us to carryout initial assessment of an area before a project begins. This is very important because the assessment tool helps us to know the need of the community. If it wasn’t for the form, we would make wrong decisions,” narrated Respondent 5.

Monitoring plans have important role on the general performance of Compassion International projects in Mbale by ensuring that all necessary aspects are addressed for the early detection of progress or shortcomings. These plans also outline the partnerships and collaborations needed to achieve the desired outcomes. Respondent 2 agreed that monitoring plans greatly influence the performance of their work, ensuring that activities are conducted on time but in Compassion International projects, they do not intentionally use these tools to carryout timely activities. We are supposed to write children’s updates to sponsors at least in three years. You will find staff filling these forms at the last minute. This negatively affects performance of the project,”

Discussing the accomplishments of Compassion International projects, Respondent 8 shared:

"Over the years, I have seen Compassion International projects deliver on many of their targets. Many registered participants have completed their education and are now gainfully employed; shelters have been constructed for those in need; sanitation and supplies have been provided; relief aid has been delivered in times of disaster (such as food aid during COVID); the Gospel has been preached, and many former participants are now pastors and reverends. Participants have received both preventive and corrective healthcare, caregivers have been supported—the list is endless. My major challenge is that much of this information is not recorded using monitoring tools. Our alumni have excelled out there but we do not have the records due to poor maintenance of monitoring tools".

Respondent 3 also highlighted the primary use of these practices on project performance: of these systems:

"Many beneficiaries have had their destinies shaped into fulfilled Christian adults. Additionally, the church has been strengthened in various ways and has become more relevant in the communities it serves". We have recorded programmatic outcomes using these reports. However, we lack intentional utilisation of the reports to inform our annual plans and budgeting processes. (Respondent 3, 22 May 2024).

In as much as there are visible roles of monitoring practices in performance of Compassion International projects, Respondent 7 highlighted a significant gap, noting that Compassion projects lack an independent monitoring unit, which compromises the quality and effectiveness of interventions. Monitoring is embedded in the general management design, largely handled by a Partnership Facilitator (PF), with support

from the audit unit and a CIV specialist. However, these roles often lack the necessary expertise to effectively monitor program interventions, leading to a focus on budgetary concerns rather than the impact of the programs.

The researcher, for example, read through the Job description of a PF in the New Vision newspaper advert of April 15, 2024 and there is no requirement for qualification in Monitoring and Evaluation. This relates with the responses from interviewees and it has an effect on project performance because this role is part of the chain in effect of monitoring on performance at project level.

Respondent 2 further added that monitoring practices are weak and ineffective, pointing out that the PFs are not always competent in all fields, and CIV specialists often focus more on budgets than on achieving results. Additionally, there is limited engagement with external support systems to enhance the monitoring function.

In summary, the study discovered that monitoring practices have roles they play in Compassion International projects in Mbale for example they help in setting goals, targets and activities which are monitored and lead to outcomes. The Control Theory also agrees that when monitoring practices are used effectively, they can lead to achievements of outcomes. If the projects plan for monitoring practices in their programs, they will be able to utilise the tools effectively to the benefit of the entire outcomes. In addition, the study discovered that there is no intentional planning from the part of projects to hire staff who are responsible for monitoring. There is also lack of planned use of these tools to help in recording effects of monitoring practices in performance of Compassion International projects.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter gives a discussion of the key findings on the Compassion International projects in Mbale district, monitoring practices and their effectiveness.

5.1 Discussion of key findings on monitoring practices implemented by Compassion International in Mbale projects

The study established that monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale district are important aspects in program implementation. The findings revealed that projects vary across different sectors ranging from education, health, spiritual and sponsorship programs i.e. CSP, CDSP and LDP; health programs, shelter construction and renovation, youth programming, WASH projects, HIV AIDS treatment and sensitizations, child protection; agriculture, nutrition and food security programs; skills development among mothers; Spiritual aspect: prayer, evangelism, and discipleship; Social emotional aspect: mentorship, life skills, games and sports, communication and correspondence. From the data collected, it was revealed that these programs are planned for and budgeted on an annual basis. When the funds are disbursed from the National Office to the projects, the ICP implements all programs and sends reports showing utilization of funds. This, according to the respondents, is done so as to fulfill donor requirements. This finding was consistent with Mutyaba

(2013) who said that there should be detailed observation if the funds which have been offered by the sponsors or donors is being used correctly. The findings point to Mutyaba's assertion that with the presence of monitoring plans, programs are effectively implemented on time. This explains why Compassion International Mbale projects use plans to implement their programs. These monitoring tools and programs are used as a means of capturing project activities. For example, as a way of supporting the church meet its goals, Compassion adds other supplementary support projects (complimentary interventions) like income generating activities for caregivers, fees top up, shelter construction, periodic emergency relief food distributions, construction and furnishing of resource centres, provision of agricultural inputs, provision of bibles, funding and facilitation of spiritual enrichment programs like seminars and conferences etc. When the above projects are added, there is need to intentionally record the impact of these monitoring tools and programs on performance of the projects. This is what is missing in the Compassion International projects.

This agrees with the control theory which was used in the study. It says that control theory prioritises the program elements that are most important for tracking and reporting throughout program implementation. The theory supported analysis of evaluation of the different monitoring practices, program objectives and the suitability of project indicators tracked in the monitoring plans to help in understanding different practices which is applicable to Compassion International projects in Mbale. The theory recommends that monitoring tools should be used for capturing organisation input, activities, output and desired outcomes. This agrees

with the main objective of the study which is to investigate the roles of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects.

In summary, Compassion International projects in Mbale have a number of monitoring practices which include reports, My Plan for Tomorrow, Third Party Letters, children correspondence with sponsors. However, these tools should be intentionally used for documenting success and also inform the future plans.

5.2 Discussion of key findings of staff perception on effectiveness of monitoring practices in Mbale projects

The study examined staff perception on monitoring practices in Compassion International projects in Mbale. Results of the study indicated that monitoring practices have significantly contributed to the correct implementation of designed programs, ensuring that the target beneficiaries are reached, and that timely and appropriate interventions are made to achieve the intended outcomes. With multiple programs being implemented among many beneficiaries and each beneficiary being treated as an individual, these tools have undeniably been crucial in effectively monitoring beneficiary development. According to respondent 1, staff write completion reports about each child who finishes the program at the age of 22. The child also is required to write a departure letter which records how they have benefited from the program. This kind of accountability helps them to understand that there is milestone that we have accomplished in each child". However, she added that completion reports are written in a hurried manner so as to meet the

deadline. If these reports are not sent on time, the project is graded as a non performing one. This, according to Respondent 1, forces project staff to submit completion reports for donor purpose as opposed to studying organisation performance.

This finding was in agreement with Naido, 2013 who expounded that while monitoring reports appear to be a burden for the project team, it is also worth noting that review process and reporting, in addition to donor prerequisites, are useful tools, particularly in longer-term, high-value projects. This is by virtue that periodical monitoring reports assist evaluators in understanding the intricacies of project delivery that are frequently overlooked in donor reports. In this context, cautious monitoring and reporting can assist in identifying special issues that must be evaluated singly or as the central objective of an appraisal as contended by Gosling & Edwards, (2009).

Findings of the study revealed that monitoring systems are numerous and demand considerable vigilance, high level of diligence, and consistency to achieve good results. Although the tools are simply designed, easy to understand, and can be administered by anyone who can read and write, their effect has sometimes been hindered by competing priorities, limited time, insufficient staff, and restricted funds for implementing some recommendations. The common functions (or purposes) of a project monitoring system are project management, accountability, and learning in order to improve performance. This finding was in agreement with Cook, (2006) that monitoring activities provide significant support to the managerial and impact function and encompass the entire management, operating systems, and organisational culture. Cook, (2006) asserts that monitoring activities are aligned with

accountability, and their exercises tend to ensure that projects meet both upward and downward accountability demands, as well as horizontal accountability demands. Compassion International projects are also involved in monitoring practices but with aim of fulfilling accountability demands rather than measuring organisation performance. The reason for carrying out these monitoring activities such as peer audits, submission of financial and program reports according to Respondent 10 to 'please' the PF who is the Compassion International representative at the field level.

The is in line with the one of UNDP which states that monitoring is a continual activity that mainly informs management, donors, government and other stakeholders about project implementation and performance. Monitoring helps with fundamental management and accountability and compares actual performance to the original design's expectations or plans. However, the project staff revealed that top management rarely holds meetings to discuss work-related issues, but they usually interface with employees only once or twice a year. In most of these discussions, monitoring is not part of the plan at all. As seen in Chapter Four, Respondent 5 explained that this lack of intentional planning, discussion on monitoring and lack of communication hampers the ability of project directors to provide effective feedback to their teams, leading to gaps in monitoring and quality control hence organisational performance.

According to Patton (2009), all parts of the program that are needed to be in place are catered for in the planning of the monitoring system so as to identify challenges before and during program implementation for better decision making. Monitoring

plans, he asserts that strengthen mechanisms for measuring program effectiveness by establishing goals, indicators and targets.

The finds show that Compassion International projects in Mbale have designed programs around four core areas, (interventions) cognitive, social emotional, physical and spiritual development of its beneficiaries where each one of them is considered as someone who is supposed to be developed to become fulfilled Christian adult. As Patton said, these programs are in place for strengthening Compassion International's measure of impact and roles of monitoring tools. However, in as much as the children stay up to age 22 on the program, most of the time attention is only given to how money has been spent not what it has been spent on and the impact of what the money has done. There is need for proper recording of roles of monitoring practices in organisation performance.

Results showed that there is a noteworthy effect of monitoring plans on organization performance. This is in agreement with Bamberger (2008) who noted that there is likelihood of using monitoring practices for promoting shared learning and accountability. Gray (2009) also noted that apart from accountability, monitoring can help in promoting learning and innovation and that the importance of monitoring in project performance cannot be overstated. From the findings, Compassion International projects show that they have monitoring practices in place but sometimes in their general cluster meetings where all the 14 projects meet for shared learning, monitoring tools and practices according to Respondent 2 are not utilised to inform them on performance. This confirms that the first objective of the study was met because the project staff acknowledge that there is noteworthy effect of

monitoring on organisation but it is not clearly planned for in Compassion International projects.

The implementation of programs in compassion projects varies from church to church because of decentralised planning; each ICP does its own plans depending on the needs assessments conducted. This is in agreement with the control theory which was used for this study. Just like Compassion International projects in Mbale have organized and decentralised plans, control theory says that organisations require continuous feedback to maintain control and achieve desired outcomes. It says that individuals and organisations operate by comparing their current state to a desired state and making adjustments based on feedback to reduce any discrepancies.

The study established that monitoring practices ensure effective tracking of progress of the programs. At the project levels in Mbale the monitoring team develops plans for dissemination and use of information and that there is a monitoring plan which is up to date. Projects plan on financial cycle which starts in July and implemented till June of the following year. In between the year, projects implement plans and write various reports which are submitted to the sponsors/donors for compliance purpose. This finding is aligned with Patton (2009) who said that all programs should be considered in the planning of the monitoring system so as to eliminate anticipated bottlenecks during implementation and helps management to make informed decisions. The findings agree with Landoni and Golini (2013) who explain that monitoring specialists need to have required information which should be got from detailed survey and this ought to run throughout the project lifecycle. When all the above factors are considered, the project is likely to have strong links with project

planning, identification, formulation, implementation and completion which leads to organisation performance.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

The study discovered that Compassion International projects in Mbale have monitoring practices in place such as annual plans and budgets, program and financial reports, tools for monitoring children progress or milestones and other program outcomes. However, most staff perceive these monitoring tools as donor reporting and compliance requirements. It is important to consider monitoring practice as a major component in the entire organisational structure and planning. The first objective of the study was to explore various monitoring practices in Compassion International projects. All respondents agreed that it is vital to consider monitoring tools as means of assessing organisational success. Compassion International for example, has a number of tools which they use for tracking children progress or milestones. These tools which include: monthly, quarterly, annual programmatic reports, financial reports, My Plan for Tomorrow, and health screening reports are all means of tracking children development which lead to monitoring of project performance and attainment of overall program outcomes. Therefore, the study proved that although staff perceive the above monitoring practices as donor requirements, they help in organisation planning and recording of outcomes.

Secondly, the study concludes that monitoring reports or tools have roles they play in Compassion International projects in Mbale. Respondents revealed that tool such as education reports, regular home visit reports are recorded and some of them

submitted to National Office but for compliance purposes yet they all contribute and inform the following year's annual plans and budgets. The projects plan for the next financial basing on information which they have collected from the mentioned monitoring tools. They, for example, decide to come up with initiatives such as local contribution of finances from parents to ensure that they own the projects. Therefore, monitoring tools have roles in development of new initiatives in Compassion International projects. They inform new areas of interventions.

Thirdly, monitoring functions or systems have effect on performance and accomplishments of Compassion International project outcomes. As stated earlier, Compassion International works with the church to release children from poverty in Jesus' name. To achieve this, they have programmatic outcomes which are monitored using tools such as Third-Party Letters which are written by Pastors to donors to show progress and impact of their funding. With such an example, Compassion International project is able to record achievement of its outcomes. In conclusion, monitoring practices contribute to recording of accomplishment of Compassion International program outcomes.

6.2 Recommendations

The study has the following recommendations in regard to the effectiveness of monitoring in Compassion International projects:

The project staff need to consider monitoring not as a mere donor requirement but a whole system that can help in planning, project assessment and it also informs the organisation in future planning.

Secondly, there is need to train field staff to appreciate that monitoring is part of the bigger organisation function. The study discovered that at project level, Compassion International projects do not have a designated staff responsible for monitoring. The role is largely left in the hands of a Partnership Facilitator who is the liaison staff between Compassion International and the projects. There is need for the organisation to train or recruit a staff who is responsible for monitoring at project level. At the moment, the role is played by a Partnership Facilitator who holds project staff accountable for monitoring activities. The staff do this as part of their so many activities. The projects need to recruit a focal person just like it is done for other aspects like health, finance, sponsor donor relations.

Thirdly, Compassion International projects need to set aside funds for implementing monitoring activities. The study revealed that these activities generally fall under different areas for example, financial reports are written by the Project Director, health report is written by the Child Development Officer in charge of health. All the mentioned staff are not qualified in monitoring and evaluation. There should be intentional plans to recruit staff who are responsible for monitoring at project level and funding should be set aside for implementing monitoring activities just like it is done for other aspects such as: health, donor relations, education, WASH and shelter renovation. Lastly, there is need for projects to appreciate the roles of monitoring practices because it will help them to advocate for planning and funding of monitoring practices in Compassion International projects. Monitoring practices need to be planned for, documented and have responsible staff for its effectiveness.

6.3 Future Research

In order to enhance understanding of monitoring practices, plans, reports and functioning system have to relate to project performance of Compassion International projects. The study recommends that additional study should be carried out in the area of examination of particular practices and dynamics inside NGOs functioning. Furthermore, the utilization of quantitative research methodologies such as survey questionnaires may offer additional insights into the underlying factors contributing to statistical aspect of this study.

Future research might take the following into consideration:

Examining the influence of Monitoring Approaches on diverse project types; Future investigations could explore the varying efficacy of different monitoring approaches within distinct project domains such as development, relief, health, WASH and Education. This would yield additional results for above mentioned sectors.

There is need to conduct a study on the impact of contextual elements, such as the cultural, economic, or political setting in which projects are implemented, and quantitatively discover the interplay between monitoring and project performance. This can also facilitate a comprehensive understanding of these interconnections.

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APPENDICES

Appendix one: Interview guide

General Question: Please tell me about yourself and Compassion International Projects?

Part A: Questions on Objective One

Question 1: Please tell me about the various projects implemented by Compassion International:

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Question 2: Kindly tell me about the monitoring practices in place at Compassion International for those projects:

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Question 3: Please comment on the effectiveness of the monitoring mechanisms for projects under Compassion International:

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Part B: Questions on Objective Two

Question 4: Please tell me about the performance of Compassion International initiatives:

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Question 5:

Please comment on the various types of monitoring reports produced by Compassion International

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Question 6:

Please comment on the impact of the various types of monitoring reports produced by Compassion International on performance of the projects

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Part C: Objective Three

Question 7:

Please comment on the functioning of the monitoring systems at Compassion International projects?

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Question 8:

Please describe the accomplishments of Compassion International projects.

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Question 9:

Please provide any additional information that can be of help in this study:

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Appendix Two: Ethical Consideration

