

**INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS AND EVALUATION QUALITY IN
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN UGANDA:
A CASE STUDY OF FHI360 UGANDA**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND
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Declaration

I, Ramadhan Kirunda, declare that, this research is my original work and has never been submitted to any other University or Institution for any academic award.

Ramadhan Kirunda

Approval

This is to certify that this dissertation has been submitted with my approval.

Supervisor: **Paul Kyalimpa**

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved, truthful God and my wonderful daughter Mary-Ann K.K who gives me the extra energy in striving to achieve and do more and more. Also, to my dear parents, sisters and brothers, nephews and nieces, all of whom have been very supportive throughout my educational journey.

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List of Abbreviations

NGO	:	Non-governmental organisation
M&E	:	Monitoring and Evaluation
IP	:	Implementing Partner
FHI360	:	Family Health International
OECD	:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Abstract

The study examined how institutional factors affect the quality of project evaluations in non-governmental organizations. It was guided by three research objectives, that is, the influence of management strength, staff competence and resource management on the quality of project evaluation at FHI360. The study used a cross-sectional survey design with a qualitative-focused but mixed method inquiry. The study population involved project team leaders, M&E staff and project implementation officers. Data was collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The study found evidence of a relationship between all institutional factors and the quality of project evaluation; but staff competence stood out as most influential. The study found out that staff competence directly influences the quality of evaluations in terms of ability to choose the right evaluation design, develop terms of reference, oversee data collection, carry out analysis and compile evaluation report. Their capacity to execute these tasks has a direct bearing on the quality of evaluation in terms of accuracy, credibility, utilization and reliability. However, there is a capacity gap in terms of having a blend of evaluative research specialists and a research unit.

It was found that management strength has a small but important effect on evaluation quality in that it allocates and avails resources, determines the quality of staff hired and is responsible for enforcing evaluation guidelines. Resource management challenges were noted as including: delays in releasing funds leading to loss of time; insufficient resources limiting the use of rigorous designs; and, hiring highly skilled staff. This affects the timeliness, utilization, credibility and accuracy of evaluations conducted. Key project stakeholders including beneficiaries are not always involved in the evaluation process, and sometimes there is delay in release of funds leading to loss of time. It was recommended that management should improve the capacity in terms of numbers and competence of M&E staff; establish an independent

research, evaluation and learning unit for FHI360 Uganda; and improve resource flow for timely, reliable and credible evaluation results.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The impetus to carry out this research arose from the challenges that continue to exist in project evaluation processes where the actual project evaluation objectives are hardly realised in the project management processes in non-government organisations. This has raised a lot of questions among the different stakeholders of various projects regarding the quality of evaluation, the likely overall impact of projects, and the prospects for the fulfilment of their intended objectives. The study was therefore aimed at finding out how internal organisational processes within NGOs affect the quality of project evaluations and what can be done to strengthen delivery on their objectives, and hence the objectives, outcomes and impacts of the projects and programmes.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of institutional factors on the quality of the project evaluation at FHI360-Uganda. The dissertation is structured into five chapters. Chapter one presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses, conceptual framework, scope of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study and definition of terms and concepts. Chapter two explores the literature on the subject, while chapter three describes the methodology and design that was used to carry out the study. Chapter four analyses and presents the results; while chapter five presents the study's conclusions and recommendations.

1.2 Background to the study

The background to the study provides an overview to the study. It presents the historical perspective of institutional factors and project evaluation, theoretical background provides a the guiding theoretical view and shows some of the aspects that empirically explain project evaluation and institutional factors in project management, conceptual background explains concepts used in the study whereas the contextual background provides the extent to which institutional factors may influence the quality of project evaluation.

1.2.1 Historical background

The development of programme evaluation as a profession started simultaneously with the appearance of foreign donors at the beginning of 1990s. Evaluation was “imported” together with the project approach as one of the management functions of foreign organizations. These organizations carried out monitoring and evaluation of the financial and technical or humanitarian support programmes and projects they had funded (Vladmir, 2004).

This work was done either by the staff of donor organizations (typically monitoring) or by experienced foreign external evaluators. Thus, the first people to become acquainted with programme evaluation were staff members in the local offices of foreign organizations such as the United Nations, international development agencies, and foundations, and, soon after, staff members of the local recipients of foreign grants. The majority of recipients of these first grants were social, educational and healthcare-related NGOs, but governmental structures at different levels and small and medium-sized businesses also received grants (Vladmir, 2004).

Projects remain the instruments of choice for all stakeholders in international development yet paradoxically, the poor performance of projects and the disappointment of project stakeholders

and beneficiaries seem to have become the rule and not the exception in contemporary reality (Lavagnon, 2010). Dissatisfaction with project results and performance dates back to the 1950s. The World Bank's private arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) has discovered that only half of its African projects succeed (Ahsan and Gunawan, 2010). This is partly blamed on institutional factors and the quality of evaluations carried out.

Historically, on a wider perspective, some researchers assert that project evaluation evaluation-like activities were already evident in the eighteenth century in the fields of education and public health (Rossi et al, 2004). Most scholars' documentation of programme evaluation's history draws the link to the Second World War when the US federal government's vast expenditure on the social sphere required a more systematic and rigorous review of spending. This resulted in the emergence of the field of programme evaluation. By the time programme evaluation reached Africa, scholars in the United States had already been debating programme evaluation's legitimacy as a discipline, conceptualised the different training options and delivered a multitude of theorists and evaluation paradigms (Mouton, 2010).

Previously, evaluations were planned, implemented and produced for donors, but increasingly the evaluation process is seen as involving all the partners. Furthermore, what is required of evaluators by these various partners is increasingly complex, and evaluators can now find themselves working to a range of audiences and masters. Older principles of accountability and conditionality have now been replaced with an increasing stress on the learning functions of the evaluation process (Collin and Stirrat, 2008). In Uganda, programme evaluation is a recent phenomenon that was initiated a few decades ago with the intensification of non-governmental programmes that required more regular accountability.

1.2.2 Theoretical background

The study was guided by Tyler's goals based theory which is the classic model on programme evaluation and organizational learning, where results are assessed only in relation to the predetermined goals and objectives (Tyler, 1942).

The evaluator closely scrutinizes the object of evaluation in relation to its goals (Hansen, 2005). Goals in this approach include objectives, performance targets and expected outcomes. The goal-based approach to evaluation was developed by Tyler in the late 1940s and has continued to evolve since. The key strength of this model is the determination of whether results align with goals. The degree of alignment between goals and results is important to know from accountability and improvement perspectives. Cameron (1986) argues that using the goal-attainment model is only possible and useful if the goals of the evaluated object are clear, if there is consensus about them, and if they are time-bound and measurable. However, this approach disregards side effects and unanticipated effects; it does not consider costs and the relevance of the goals is not questioned (Mickwitz, 2003). The approach does not question whether the chosen goals or targets are valid or appropriate measures of effectiveness. If this approach is seen as equivalent to an outcome or summative evaluation, underlying mechanisms and process questions might be ignored. Policy makers and evaluators are often interested in the unintended consequences or outcomes of a policy, programme or project. These unintended outcomes may be beneficial or harmful.

1.2.3 Conceptual background

Project evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. Project evaluation quality looks at attainment of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Therefore, an evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors (Stufflebeam, 2011).

Evaluation is an assessment of a planned, ongoing or completed intervention. The main goal of evaluation is to analyze the relevance of a programme or project and its contribution to objectives, as well as its efficiency, effectiveness, targeting efficiency and impacts (expected and unexpected) and sustainability. An evaluation must provide credible and useful information, making it possible to integrate lessons learned from experience into the decision-making process (OECD, 2002). Evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an intervention and its contribution to global objectives. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and the contributions of the implementing bodies (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2005).

The competence of the evaluator is one factor that affects the quality of evaluations world over. This has called for the establishment of professional bodies in various countries with the aim of equipping the evaluators with adequate skills to be able to do the job well and professionally. Based on differences in training, experience, and work settings, the profession of evaluation encompasses diverse perceptions about the primary purpose of evaluation. These include but are not limited to the following: bettering products, personnel, programmes, organizations, governments, consumers and the public interest; contributing to informed decision making and more enlightened change; precipitating needed change; empowering all stakeholders by

collecting data from them and engaging them in the evaluation process; and experiencing the excitement of new insights (Kahan & Goodstadt, 2005).

In project evaluation quality, the criteria include relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Relevance refers to the extent to which the project suits the priorities of the target group, the recipient and the donor. Efficiency refers to the extent to which the project uses the least costly resources possible to achieve the desired results. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the project meets its objectives. Impact refers to the positive and negative changes produced by the project, directly or indirectly, intentionally or not. Sustainability refers to whether the benefits of the project are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn (Ika, 2009).

Project evaluation quality entails both efficiency and effectiveness with critical institutional success factors that refer more specifically to conditions, events and circumstances contributing to project success (Jugdev and Müller, 2005; Ika, 2009). The most well-known list of such factors include project mission, top-management support, project schedule, client consultation, personnel, technical tasks, client-acceptance, monitoring and feedback, communication, and finally, troubleshooting (Pinto and Slevin, 2008).

Scientific expertise, while highly valued, is not the only expertise that matters. Assessment must also take into account whether research is perceived as salient and legitimate in the eyes of multiple stakeholders and potential users, and it must attend in a significant way to questions of the effectiveness of the research in terms of its relevance, use, and impact. The latter kind of assessment relies on the expertise of relevant stakeholders in judging the legitimacy and relevance of the research undertaking (Ofir et al 2016).

1.2.4 Contextual background

FHI360 is a non-profit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. FHI360 staff includes experts in health, education, nutrition, environment, economic development, civil society, gender, youth, research, technology, communication and social marketing, creating a unique mix of capabilities to address today's interrelated development challenges (FHI360, 2016).

FHI360 serves more than 71 countries. In Uganda, it was established in 2006, implementing Health projects in the areas of Family Planning and HIV/AIDS, but has since grown and implements projects in Health, Education, Livelihoods, Climate Change, among others. FHI360 has institutionalized monitoring, evaluation and research and is among the re-known NGOs in research, monitoring and evaluation.

As a science-driven organization, FHI360 is committed to a continuous process of learning and knowledge sharing for improved development solutions around the world.

FHI360's research, monitoring and evaluation specialists conduct high-quality studies and evaluations that contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of interventions in a wide variety of contexts. This is majorly due to the fact that the monitoring, evaluation and research function is institutionalised. FHI360 has a headquarter-based ethics review committee, a scientific committee and has recruited several research and evaluation specialists. This has placed it as a strong organisation in research and evaluative work.

In Uganda, project evaluation among government and non-government projects still faces significant challenges in terms of achieving the actual objectives of the evaluation process and largely the costs involved in finishing an evaluation exercise. However, the discipline in Uganda is steadily growing in recognition of the need to determine the exact effects of development programmes and policies on the population. All institutions, whether in the public or private

sector, are increasingly interested in rationalizing available resources so that the most strategic interventions are implemented. Knowing what works or does not can only be determined through implementation and dissemination of timely and credible evaluations (Uganda Evaluation Standards, 2011).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

FHI360 Uganda has succeeded in conducting high quality research, monitoring and evaluation; has designed, commissioned and many times implemented project evaluations that inform decisions about future interventions; and has gained reputation as one of the leaders in research and evaluation, an area where many NGOs are still struggling, with anecdotal evidence, pointing to institutional factors and capacity as the main hindrance.

Nabbumba et al (2013) in *Uganda Evaluation standards* noted that Uganda has nascent technical evaluation capacity that has to be nurtured. The commissioners of evaluations and evaluators both have capacity inadequacies. Naidoo and Jannuzzi (2014) in the *UNDP Evaluation capacities* noted that commissioners and clients do not operate alone either. They play a role in organizations which have a purpose, a way of working and, sometimes, strategic aims in their evaluation work. Evaluations may be conducted using established evaluation systems or procedures, for example, for ways of developing terms of reference or finding and hiring evaluators. Thus, credibility not only depends on the quality and independence of the evaluators, but also on the institutions and systems where these evaluations are conceived, planned and managed. Hauge (2003) in his paper 'Evaluation Capacity Development' concluded that what Uganda needs is not more, but better project evaluation. Rather than volume of M & E activity, what matters is the quality of evaluation and practices in funnelling managers' attention toward a

clear and coherent understanding of what difference they do or can make to national development.

Therefore, while there is evidence suggesting that the quality of project evaluation is dependent on the institutions and systems where these evaluations are conceived, planned and managed, very little or no scientific inquiry has been conducted to explore how institutional factors influence the quality of project evaluation, hence the research.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The study therefore sought to examine how institutional factors affect the quality of project evaluations in non-governmental organisations.

1.3 Objectives of the study

- 1 To establish the influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation.
- 2 To investigate the influence of staff competence on the quality of project evaluation.
- 3 To examine the influence of resource management on the quality of project evaluation.

1.4 Research questions

- 1 How does management strength at FHI360 influence the quality of project evaluation?
- 2 How does staff competence within FHI360 influence the quality of project evaluation?
- 3 How does resource management at FHI360 affect the quality of project evaluation?

1.5 Hypotheses of the study

- 1 Management strength can influence the quality of evaluation.
- 2 Staff competence has an influence on the quality of project evaluation.
- 3 Resource management affects the quality of project evaluation.

1.6 Conceptual framework on how institutional factors affect evaluation quality

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (IV)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE (DV)

Institutional Factors

Project Evaluation Quality

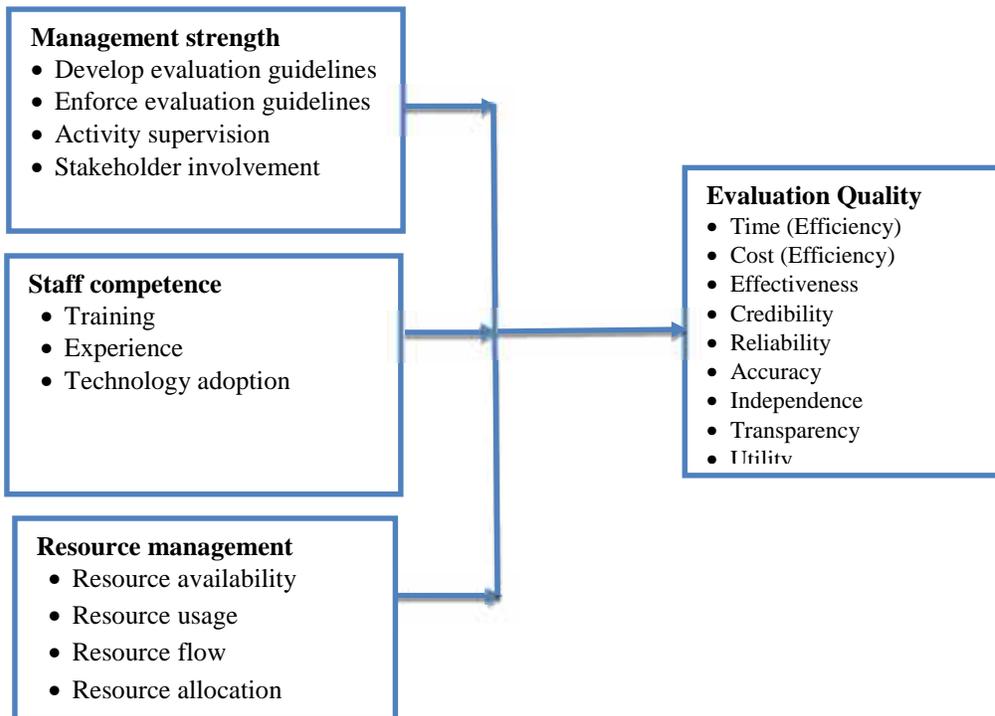


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Adopted and modified from Serge and Victor (2009)

The framework above shows the institutional factors which affect evaluation quality. These include: management strength, staff competence and resource management and these are the

independent variables, with evaluation quality as the independent variable. These are related in a way that management strength, staff competence and availability and resource management directly affect the quality of project evaluation.

1.7 Justification of the study

This study will particularly help the FHI360 project implementation staff, M & E officers, the researcher, and project managers to better understand the level and nature of influence that institutional factors have on the quality project of evaluations, why it is important and how to overcome quality challenges to be able to meet the expectations of the stakeholders, as well as provide valuable information for future evaluations. These results are likely to inform policies towards the setting up of stronger monitoring and evaluation systems, and show how M & E can be used as a powerful management tool to improve the way organizations and stakeholders can achieve greater accountability, transparency and impact. The study will for long remain beneficial to NGOs, donor agencies, project managers and project management students who are involved in the designing and execution of project evaluations. Although this study looked at the challenges to quality evaluations for donor-funded projects and environments, it is also relevant in areas of M & E systems strengthening and contributed to the body of knowledge. This is because it can now be used as a reference material by researchers. The study also identified areas related to project evaluation that may require more research.

1.8 Scope of the study

The study was conducted within Kampala which is the capital city of Uganda and is where the headquarters of FHI360 are situated as well as regional offices located in the western, northern, and eastern regions where most projects have been implemented, monitored and evaluated.

In terms of content, the study focused on management strength, staff competence and resource management as the dependent variables, while evaluation quality was the independent variable.

The study focused on a project time frame of between 2006 and 2015. These generated experience-based responses from project staff who have worked on long-term projects with FHI360. The study itself took five months, involving data collection cleaning, analysis and report writing.

The study involved 45 FHI360 staff, targeting top management officers, project implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation staff who have implemented and/or been part of project assessments and evaluations between 2000 and 2015.

1.9 Significance of the study

The results of this report are of value to the following:

NGOs in development work: The findings of the report will enlighten NGOs of the key factors that play a significant role in ensuring the quality of evaluations in the project evaluations. The information gathered in this report could be utilized by administration of FHI360-Uganda and donors to know where the major weaknesses lie in ensuring quality evaluations in project management process, especially in terms of why despite the heavy funding, no significant impact is realised on the community/beneficiary level.

Policy makers: As individuals charged with formulating policies, their understanding of having quality project evaluation process remains a key task to them in order to improve service delivery in organizations. Therefore, findings from this report will help them in the formulation of better policies that encourage improvement and impact-oriented service delivery in the country. The policy makers may review their decisions on how best they can involve the relevant bodies in the struggle to improve service delivery in Uganda.

Researchers: The issues raised in this report are likely to lead to the involvement of various researchers in generating more knowledge from various perspectives, given that very little

inquiry has been done on evaluation quality. These results are going to form a basis for further research to those interested in finding out more on how institutional factors influence the quality of evaluation in the project management process.

1.10 Definition of key terms

Project Evaluation: This is the systematic application of scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement or outcomes of a programme (Rossi & Freeman, 1993; Short, Hennessy & Campbell, 1996). The term "programme" may include any organized action such as media campaigns, service provision, educational services, public policies, research projects, etc. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1999). It is the systematic investigation of the quality of programmes, projects and their subcomponents (JCSEE, 2012).

Institutional factors: These are internal organisational management factors that may influence the way in which the project is evaluated. These relate to structures and society and includes rules, norms and routines that guide behaviour in an organisation.

Institutional theory describes the way in which particular social institutions affect the business practices, the behaviour of a company, and organizational form including the choice of performance measures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991 as cited by Elnihewi, 2014).

Evaluation capacity development: This refers to the efforts aimed at strengthening and sustaining both individuals and organizations to access, build, and implement evaluative knowledge and skills design, implement, and manage effective evaluation processes and findings and use evaluations as a performance improvement tool (World Bank, 2010)

Quality in project evaluation relates to the appropriate and application of evaluation standards, impartial presentation and analysis of evidence, and coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations (WHO, 2013).

A **Quality Evaluation** is one that provides credible and useful evidence to strengthen accountability for development results. It relates to the ability to meet the minimum standards as defined in the evaluation guidelines (OECD, 2010)

Accuracy relates to standards set to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the programme being evaluated.

Credibility is the extent to which evaluation findings and conclusions are believable and trustworthy. Credibility is determined by **objective** factors, such as the accuracy of an evaluation report, and subjective factors.

Transparency is the openness with which the evaluation process is conducted. It involves consulting with stakeholders and informing them about the purpose of the evaluation, methods and criteria used, and processes followed.

Independence in project evaluation means that the evaluation is free from influences that would bias the conduct, findings, conclusions or recommendations of the evaluation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of literature on the institutional factors which influence evaluation quality. It is presented according to the objectives of the study and the theoretical framework.

2.2 Theoretical review

The study was guided by the goals-based theory (Tyler, 1940) which is the classic model on programme evaluation where results are assessed only in relation to the predetermined goals. The evaluator closely scrutinizes the object of evaluation in relation to its goals (Hansen, 2005). Goals in this approach include objectives, performance targets and expected outcomes. The goals-based approach to evaluation was developed by Tyler in the late 1940s and has continued to evolve since. The key strength of this model is the determination of whether results align with goals. The degree of alignment between goals and results is important to know from accountability and improvement perspectives. Cameron (1986) argues that using the goal-attainment model is only possible and useful if the goals of the evaluated object are clear, if there is consensus about them, and if they are time-bound and measurable. However, this approach disregards side effects and unanticipated effects, it does not consider costs and the relevance of the goals is not questioned (Mickwitz, 2003). Yet, the approach does not question whether the chosen goals or targets are valid or appropriate measures of effectiveness. If this approach is seen as equivalent to an outcome or summative evaluation, underlying mechanisms and process questions might be ignored. Policy makers and evaluators are often interested in the unintended

consequences or outcomes of a policy, programme or project. These unintended outcomes may be beneficial or harmful.

In this, focus is only on concrete goals or effects related to a specific intervention or organization, and aims to evaluate the results of these, the goal theory model opens up the underlying black box of the goal theory, uncovers mechanisms and raises the focus to a cluster of interventions or to an organizational field.

Evaluators often start out by clarifying a programme's aims, objectives and the desired outcomes, but theory-based approaches suggest that evaluators also go on to elicit the key assumptions and linkages underlying how a programme has been designed, that is understanding the logic of how the programme is supposed to operate to achieve the desired outcomes (Sullivan et al, 2007).

The programme theory is useful because it guides evaluation by identifying the key elements of the programme, clarifying how these elements are planned in order to be connected to each other (Cooksy, Gill and Kelly, 2001). Thus, since the study aims to explore how institutional factors affect the quality of project evaluation, it is important to understand how various programme and institutional elements are inter-connected in order to understand how they influence each other.

Evaluation is a methodological area that is closely related to, but distinguishable from, more traditional social research. Evaluation utilizes many of the same methodologies used in traditional social research; but because evaluation takes place within a political and organizational context, it requires group skills, management ability, political dexterity, sensitivity to multiple stakeholders and other skills that social research in general does not rely on as much (William, 2006). Therefore, in applying Tyler's goals-based programme theory, it is important to take into consideration the methodological aspects, as they relate to evaluator competence.

2.3 Evaluation standards and evaluation quality

To achieve quality evaluations, NGOs must embrace the established and generally accepted national, international and donor evaluation standards, and enforce or adhere to them.

According to (DAC, 2010), there are four basic principles of a sound evaluation, and each of the principles has standards that must be met for a sound evaluation. These principles are: utility, propriety, feasibility, and accuracy. The seven Utility Standards collectively require that evaluations be grounded in stakeholder involvement and articulated values, and be credible, informative, timely, and influential. The eight Propriety Standards require that evaluations be ethical and fair to the affected parties, including both the service providers and their clients. The three Feasibility Standards require that the evaluation procedures and level of effort are appropriate, affordable, politically viable, and reasonably easy to implement. The 12 Accuracy Standards require that evaluations reveal and convey technically adequate information and justified inferences about the features of the programme or other object that determine its merit and worth.

Therefore, to understand evaluation quality, the benchmark is how the evaluation rates on each of the standards per evaluation principle. Therefore, the level of compliance and enforcement of these standards is key to the quality of project evaluation.

A quality evaluation should provide credible and useful evidence to strengthen accountability for development results or contribute to learning processes, or both. These Standards aim to improve quality and ultimately to reinforce the contribution of evaluation to improving development outcomes (DAC, 2010).

In 1994, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation in the United States issued programme evaluation standards¹⁶. Since then, other professional associations have

generated their own guidelines, principles or standards. The formulation and publication of standards by professional associations has been welcomed even as their limits have been acknowledged. Thus, the American Evaluation Association was responding to a felt need when it developed *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* (1994) that specify basic criteria for the professional and honourable conduct of evaluations (Picciotto, 2005).

Similarly, the Joint Committee (JC) on Standards for Educational Evaluation published influential standards for the conduct of programme evaluations. It deals with ethical, contractual and methodological aspects (Picciotto, 2005).

Evaluation standards identify how the quality of an evaluation will be judged. They can be used when planning an evaluation as well as for meta-evaluation (evaluating the evaluation). Many organizations have guidelines which address issues of quality and ethics together (Better Evaluation, 2014)

Nabbumba et al (2013) in the Uganda Evaluation standards identifies five evaluation standards namely: S1 Utility - ensure that the evaluation is useful and will serve the information needs of intended users and owned by all stakeholders; S2 Feasibility - ensure that the evaluation is participatory, realistic and efficient; S3 Quality and Precision - ensure that the evaluation results answer the evaluation questions that were set at the onset. The evaluation should collect technically relevant data, demonstrating efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of programme and policies to be evaluated. The data collection and analysis methods should be professionally suitable, with a high level of relevance, validity and reliability of the information used and resulting from the evaluation; S4 Ethical Conduct - ensure that the evaluator upholds ethics and integrity and safeguards the rights and wellbeing of stakeholders involved in the

evaluation or affected by its findings. The evaluation should be inclusive; and S5 Capacity Development - ensure that the capacity of evaluators and commissioners of evaluations is continuously upgraded to reach the desired competencies.

Evaluation standards are supposed to guide or control how evaluation professionals and users should behave (ethical norms), what concepts and practices evaluators should use (methods), the benchmarks their products should meet (quality), the outcomes they should achieve (utilization) or the instruments needed to ensure that agreed standards are met and results achieved in the public interest (verification).

Poor quality evaluations fail to provide the reader with any true or reliable insight into the achievement or challenges, poor quality evaluations fail to provide the reader with any true or reliable insight into the achievement of a programme, and are essentially useless and unproductive.

The most common reasons for a poor evaluation include difficulties in collecting/gathering data, lack of critical analysis, lack of contextualisation, insufficient time allowed, and inexperienced evaluators (Laybourn, 2010). These reasons put by Laybourn may be true, but it is not clear how they affect quality of evaluations which is the main focus of this study.

Evaluation contributes to public involvement in decisions by reducing information asymmetries and providing advice to the public and to decision makers that can be used to enhance the outcomes of policies and programmes. Through participation, evaluation amplifies the influence of those who may not have direct access to decision makers—employees, clients, the poor, etc. Access to relevant information is often too costly to be secured by individual actors. Effective collection and interpretation of the evidence requires competence. In this context, standards of quality and comprehensiveness of guidelines (to cover all stages of the evaluation cycle) provide

comfort about the validity, accuracy and objectivity of evaluation findings (Picciotto, 2005). However, while this is true, there is no mention on how it affects the quality hence the study.

To ensure the quality of the knowledge produced by evaluative processes, respect for Evaluation standards should be a priority, as demonstrated by increased attention by both evaluation professional organizations. Evaluative knowledge streams should highly be focused on utilization. (Vladmir, 2004).

Therefore, it is important to note that adherence to national and donor evaluation guidelines enhances the quality of project evaluations. Most projects implemented by NGOs are donor funded and thus evaluations of such projects must follow donor and/or national evaluation guidelines and standards if their evaluations are to achieve the desired quality.

Institutional factors have a significant impact on the quality of evaluations key to project success. Diallo and Thuillier (2004) surveyed African national projects and identified quality evaluations based on fulfilment of objectives, time taken in evaluation, and budget used in carrying out the evaluation. The usefulness of an evaluation depends on credibility which relies on transparency of the process and the quality of the evaluation. The quality of the evaluation has to be checked at four levels: the terms of reference, the evaluation process, the evaluation report and the dissemination and feedback of the relevant stakeholders.

Evaluation is premised on the common idea that quality is discernible and capable of representation. To distinguish quality one must be able to discriminate and to tell the difference between the absence and presence of quality. Discerning quality is always a matter of expectation and comparison. Notions of quality have no meaning; absent notions of inferiority, insignificance, worthlessness, and unimportance. One rarely deals with a situation in which the

judgment of quality is clear-cut and straightforward. Judgments of quality usually leave room for doubt (Stake & Schwandt, 2005).

However, in most developing economies, quality evaluations are hampered by institutional factors that largely affect effective processes of project evaluations. In this there is a cost challenge where programme evaluation may prove expensive if the implementing team does not effectively manage the evaluation costs. A rigorous evaluation can cost more than a programme has allotted. Also, evaluation efforts may be time-consuming and could divert staff from the day-to-day programme functioning. Evaluations may require expertise to determine appropriate methodologies to use with other important aspects in the evaluation process and such expertise may be lacking and these challenges significantly affect the quality of an evaluation in the long run (Cooksy et al, 2001). Therefore, while these challenges stated by Cooksy may be true, there is no mention on how they particularly affect the quality of evaluations hence the study

In the past, evaluation capacity development focused on strengthening the capacities of individuals' knowledge and skills. However, it is now clear that capacity development should be based on a systemic approach that takes into account three major levels (individual, institutional, and external enabling environment), and two components (demand and supply) tailored to the specific context of each country (Karkara, 2013).

Reed and Morariu (2010) in the *state of evaluation study* in the United States of America found out that too few organizations have the support, capacity, and expertise they need to harness the power of evaluation. Richer, qualitative data is being passed over in favour of more easily collected and analysed quantitative data. Evaluation is not being used to paint the full picture of effectiveness, progress, and outcomes or the lack thereof. Morariu and Pankaj (2012), state of

evaluation study found that limited staff time, insufficient financial resources, and limited staff expertise in evaluation are significant barriers to evaluation across the not for profit sector. These are the same top three challenges named in State of Evaluation (2010).

The institutional framework for evaluation ensures that a system exists to implement and safeguard the independence, credibility and utility of evaluation within an organization. At the individual level, a capacity development strategy should strengthen senior management capacity to strategically plan evaluations and to identify the key evaluation questions; and to manage and use evaluations (Karkara, 2013). Karkara here doesn't explain how quality is affected hence the study.

Several donor agencies have systems in place to ensure the quality of their own evaluations, or those of their funded NGOs. For example, the Swedish Development Agency, Sida, commissioned an independent assessment of Sida evaluations in 2008, which assessed their coverage, credibility and usefulness of the results information. The report found several areas of weakness, and recommended improvements to Sida's evaluation processes (Laybourn, 2010).

The number of evaluations submitted to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) decreased from nearly 500 in 1994 to approximately 170 in 2009, despite an almost three-fold increase in programme dollars managed. Over that period, the Agency's evaluation activities have been subject to both internal and external critiques regarding methodological quality, objectivity, access to evaluation findings, and use of evaluation recommendations for decision making (USAID Evaluation policy 2011).

Evaluations are expected to use methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked, taking into consideration time, budget

and other practical considerations. The characteristics on which USAID focuses when planning and managing evaluations including: an Evaluation SOW that identifies a small number of evaluation questions to be answered, all of which must be addressed with empirical evidence in the evaluation; a written evaluation design, including methods, main features of data collection instruments, and data analysis plans that are shared with country-level stakeholders as well as with the implementing partners for comment before being finalized; a team with the appropriate methodological and subject-matter expertise to conduct an excellent evaluation that includes, as a minimum, an evaluation specialist and an external team leader, an adequate budget and timeline for a high quality evaluation; data collection and analytic methods that ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that if a different,



well-qualified evaluator were to undertake the same evaluation, he or she would arrive at the same or similar findings and conclusions; application of social science methods and tools that reduce the need for evaluator-specific judgments and standardized recording and maintenance of records from the evaluation (e.g., focus group transcripts) among others (USAID Evaluation Policy, 2011). All these feed into the USAID Quality Evaluation Framework.

Evaluation standards are supposed to guide or control how evaluation professionals and users should behave (ethical norms), what concepts and practices evaluators should use (methods), the benchmarks their products should meet (quality), the outcomes they should achieve (utilization) or the instruments needed to ensure that agreed standards are met and results achieved in the public interest, i.e. verification (Picciotto, 2005)

The priority for institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation is more widely recognized. Although there are no 'quick fixes' to achieve this objective, there is a rapidly-growing body of experience about how to do this, and what to avoid (Mackay, 2006).

To ensure the quality of the knowledge produced by evaluative processes, respect for Evaluation standards should be a priority, as demonstrated by increased attention by both evaluation professional organizations. Evaluative knowledge streams should be highly focused on utilization. (Vladmir, 2004).

2.4 Management strength and project evaluation quality

York (2010) in DAC Evaluation standards noted that management organises the evaluation process and is responsible for day-to-day administration. Depending on the size and complexity of the evaluation, these functions may be combined or separate. While this view points to management's role in the evaluation process, it does not specify how management influences the quality of evaluation, apart from the process, a question that needs to be answered.

Karkara (2013) points out that the institutional framework for evaluation ensures that a system exists to implement and safeguard the independence, credibility and utility of evaluation within an organization. At the individual level, a capacity development strategy should strengthen senior management capacity to strategically plan evaluations and to identify the key evaluation questions; and to manage and use evaluations. While all these are well stated, there is no mention on the quality aspect of evaluation. it is possible to have adequate capacity yet come out with poor quality evaluations, hence the need to investigate how management influences evaluation quality. Involving stakeholders during evaluation planning and implementation can add value by; providing perspectives on what will be considered a credible, high quality and useful evaluation, contributing to the program logic and framing of key evaluation questions, facilitating quality

data collection, helping to make sense of the data that has been collected, increasing the utilization of the evaluation's findings by building knowledge about and support for the evaluation. (Better Evaluation, 2014).

Preskill et al (2012) in their practical guide to involve stakeholders in evaluation noted that by soliciting the opinions, interests, concerns and priorities of stakeholders early in the evaluation process, the results are more likely to address stakeholders' specific information needs and be useful for a range of purposes, among them to improve programme effectiveness, to affect policy decisions and/or to instigate behavioural change. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders in the question development process also provides opportunities to question assumptions, explore competing explanations, and develop consensus around what the evaluation should address. Taking differing views into account creates an evaluation process and eventual set of findings that will be regarded as credible.

The involvement of all stakeholders like project managers, team members, funding and implementing agencies, target beneficiaries, and the general public to effectively supervise the evaluation process may greatly influence the evaluation process. The success of this phase has a carry-over effect on the next one and effective consultation with stakeholders proves to be the most influential factor on project management success and more important than the competence of project supervisors and managers (Bamberger & Michael, 2009).

The quality of any project evaluation is very linked to the level of participation of key stakeholders in the project or programme and as such, where stakeholders have been side-lined, the quality is always questionable. Participatory evaluation is a partnership approach to evaluation in which stakeholders actively engage in developing the evaluation and all phases of

its implementation. Those who have the most at stake in the programme, partners, programme beneficiaries, funders and key decision makers, play active roles. Participation occurs throughout the evaluation process including: Identifying relevant questions, planning the evaluation design, selecting appropriate measures and data collection methods, gathering and analysing data (Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002).

Stakeholder involvement improves downward as well as horizontal and vertical accountability and is very critical and important today. As earlier noted, this is most obvious in recent discussions of ‘empowering evaluations’ where evaluation is seen as a process through which marginal and disempowered groups are able to gain skills and influence through their involvement in evaluation (Fetterman and Wanderson, 2004; Fetterman et al, 1996; Holte-McKenzie et al, 2006; Schnoes et al, 2000). It is also apparent in the changing ways in which ‘accountability’ is defined. No more is it simply a matter of accountability to donors, but also of downward accountability to beneficiaries.

Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential at all stages of the evaluation process. Involvement of and consultation with stakeholders facilitates consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations; it also heightens the credibility and quality of the evaluation (UNIDO, 2006). This may be correct, but no study has been conducted in Uganda, especially in NGO environment to prove it, which makes this study necessary.

According to the Development Assistance’ Evaluation Quality Standards (2010), relevant stakeholders are supposed to be involved early on in the evaluation process and given the

opportunity to contribute to evaluation design, including by identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered.

In order to increase ownership of development and build mutual accountability for results, a partnership approach to development evaluation is systematically considered early in the process. The concept of partnership connotes an inclusive process, involving different stakeholders such as government, parliament, civil society, intended beneficiaries and international partners (DAC 2010).

From the above arguments, stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process enhances the quality of project evaluation, and it is the role of management team of NGOs to ensure that all key stakeholders participate at all stages of the evaluation process if quality is to be achieved.

Diallo and Thuillier (2005) assert that the ability of management to effectively enforce the available rules and regulations in the project evaluation process is important towards evaluation success. This is achieved through effective communication through different stakeholders. Communication and trust between project supervisors and project coordinators influences project success (Ika et al, (2010).

Management helps to guide the evaluation staff on key evaluation guidelines that are more likely to lead to attainment of high results. To ensure this, management can spearhead an internal evaluation programme for staff that are leading evaluation efforts in their teams and want to share and deepen their skills and knowledge. This may also work through debriefs of evaluation programme staff by assessing what went well, what did not, key lessons, and actions taken as a result. Synthesize and share relevant lessons with other programme staff so they can benefit from promising practice and lessons learned (Rogers & Patricia, 2009). The views of Rogers and

Patricia seem convincing and are in agreement with Diallo and Thuiller, but there is no mention of how these guidelines affect the quality of project evaluation. This particular inquiry will attempt to unravel these details.

Successful project management requires leaders to fully plan according to the guidelines available for evaluation with a commitment to complete the project, careful appointment of a skilled project manager; spending time to define the project adequately, correctly planning the activities in the project; ensuring correct and adequate information flows, changing activities to accommodate frequent changes on dynamic, accommodating employees' personal goals with performance and rewards and making a fresh start when mistakes in implementation have been identified (Cash & Fox, 2012).

Effective leadership with supervision can help project managers to effectively control the achievement of the project objectives. Utilising the existing organisational structures and resources, it seeks to manage the project by applying a collection of tools and techniques, without adversely disturbing the routine operation of the company (Kerzner, 2009). The function of project management includes defining the requirement of work, establishing the extent of work, allocating the resources required, planning the execution of the work, monitoring the progress of the work and adjusting deviations from the plan.

The leadership strength reflected in their ability to offer effective supervision of the ongoing evaluation process remains crucial towards project success. This is largely emphasized in the consultation during strategy development, support programme staff in framing evaluation priorities, questions, sequencing, and methods (Carvalho et al, 2004). While this may be true, Carvalho was silent about the “how” element, that is how does this strength in supporting the

evaluation processes influence evaluation quality? There is therefore need to fill this quality question.

2.5 Staff competencies and project evaluation quality

The quality of the evaluation is assessed in terms of the persons tasked with leading and implementing the evaluation work, the evaluative process and the output of the evaluation (Agence Française de Développement, 2013). This is a valid observation but it does not go ahead to detail the ways in which the persons involved affect quality, or the specific quality aspect that are affected, hence the need for the study.

There has been a lack of credibility of evaluators and evaluations amongst policy-makers, and a tendency by development organizations to treat evaluation as a necessary but somewhat marginal activity (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008).

Staff competences in project evaluation process significantly determine evaluation quality in the the long run of the project management process. Skills matter for evaluators who are in the position of determining what works and what does not, and who have the responsibility to help guide the institutions we work for toward practices that will yield the best results, professional competence is a must. Yet, the evaluation family has struggled for years now with the challenge of establishing a broadly agreed upon professional profile for evaluation practitioners (Baker et al, 2004).

The expertise of a key evaluation team in the evaluation process enables staff to effectively identify key issues that will enable a functional evaluation process like setting up of the M & E system, implementation of the M & E system, involvement of the project stakeholders, and communication of the M & E results (Guijt et al, 2002). Experienced staff members are able to

know that an ideal M & E system should be independent enough to be externally credible and socially legitimate, but not so independent to lose its relevance (Briceno, 2010). It should therefore be able to influence policy-making from recommendations of lessons learned from evaluations conducted as well as be sustainable over time for it to be responsive to the needs of the stakeholders. The above views may be correct, but we need to further understand which aspects of quality are affected and how they are affected, hence the study.

The quality of the evaluation is determined by the competence of the staff involved in the evaluation process in terms of the training and experience. This allows getting effective results that attach value to the evaluation process. Evaluation is an important tool that an organisation can use to demonstrate its accountability, improve its performance, increase its abilities for obtaining funds or future planning, and fulfil the organizational objectives. By communicating the results of the evaluation, your organization can inform its staff, board of directors, service users, funders, the public, or other stakeholders about the benefits and effectiveness of your organization's services and programmes, and explain how charities work and how they are monitored (Rogers & Patricia, 2009). Again, Rogers and Patricia raise valid points, but they do not explain how staff competence affects the quality of evaluation. Therefore, this study will attempt to fill this gap left by their argument.

According to the World Food Programme Evaluation Policy (2008), the structural independence and institutional framework to ensure impartiality, credibility and utility of evaluations lay the foundation for independent evaluation. Evaluators have to exercise personal integrity and behavioural independence to complement these structural and institutional arrangements

A quality evaluation with competent staff results into good information for the organization to make effective decisions. Information derived from project evaluations can be used to serve

many purposes. A successful project evaluation may therefore be measured by the utilization of the information got from it (Briceno, 2010). Monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of the project's design, implementation and completion (Chaplowe, 2008). It is useful to all projects, big or small, since information got from it enables better decision making by helping to identify project areas that are on target and those that need to be adjusted or replaced. Weaknesses in the project are identified on time and corrective measures taken (Gorgens et al, 2010).

Quality evaluations are as a result of skilled programme and relevant operational staff responsible and accountable for designing, commissioning, and managing evaluations, as well as for using their results. Such competence helps to effectively meet standards of quality, relevance, and use. They may use a fully distributed model, with programme officers responsible for their own evaluations, or they may designate a team member to lead evaluation efforts (White & Howard, 2008).

It is vital to manage any conflicts of interest of the evaluator and the evaluation team to ensure credibility and mitigate bias. In advance, everyone on the evaluation team must disclose any personal, financial, or other relationships they have that might pose a conflict of interest (or the appearance of a conflict) in their role as evaluators (CDC, 2015).

Competent staff members allow evaluations to use multiple methods to collect and analyze data. This process of triangulation allows one method to complement the weaknesses of another. Randomized experiments can determine whether a certain outcome can be attributed to an intervention. But complementary qualitative methods are also needed to answer questions about how and why an intervention did or did not work, questions that are central to replication. Thus

as part of early planning, it is ideal to select methods that match evaluation questions (Woolcock and Michael, 2009).

Experienced staff members help to maximize rigour without compromising relevance. Part of maximizing rigour is reducing bias in the evaluation. While not all evaluations can feasibly be randomized so that we can definitely attribute impact to one or more interventions, the essence of good evaluation involves some comparison against expectations, over time, and across types of interventions, organizations, populations, or regions. Even when there is no formal counterfactual, it can be helpful to engage in thought experiments to challenge easy interpretations of data and consider alternative explanations. Multiple methods help reduce bias as does active consideration of how the methods are applied. For instance, if an advocacy initiative is being evaluated largely through qualitative interviews of key informants, it will be important to include respondents who are not cheerleaders, but may offer constructive critiques (Chen, 2004).

Competence allows staff members to connect all stages in the evaluation process. It is essential that Foundation staff engage with grantees about evaluation and communicate with them early and often about expectations. What is communicated and how, will of course depend on the purpose of the evaluation and the grantee's role in it. At a grant's inception, programme staff should inform grantees that they may be expected to participate in an evaluation, share data with the Foundation and evaluators, and potentially, if relevant, have the results shared with the field. It is never a good idea to surprise grantees with an evaluation. Often this expectation needs to be communicated and reinforced several times (Chen, 2005). The above assertions by Chen may be valid, but they don't show how the quality of project evaluation will be affected, hence the need for this study.

Terms of reference and inception reports constitute key tools in assuring the quality of outcome-level evaluations. While terms of reference reflect a programme unit's intentions and proposed approach for the evaluation, the inception report represents the commissioned evaluation team's interpretation of the terms of reference and outlines the specific methodology to be applied. It is essential that both documents be reviewed by peer and reference groups, and that sufficient time be allocated to the review process. As such, programme units should not treat terms of reference and inception reports as internal. Buy-in and ownership on the part of stakeholders can only be obtained if they are given the opportunity to review and contribute to the terms of reference and inception reports, and are essential in increasing the likelihood of the evaluation being used once conclusions and recommendations are made available (UNDP, 2011).

Only evaluation teams (whether internal or external) that possess the education, capabilities, skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the SOW/protocol should conduct evaluations (CDC, 2015). This clearly suggests that staff competence has an effect on the quality of project evaluation, but because there is no mention of how the evaluation teams alluded to influence quality, this study is very vital in helping to answer that dimension.

Therefore, from the above literature, it is evident that staff competences in evaluation in terms of training, experience and expertise have a big influence on the quality of project evaluation. However, there is little or no mention at all, on how the various aspects of staff competence influence the quality of project evaluation, which underlines the necessity of this study.

2.6 Resource management and project evaluation quality

The quality of evaluations may be determined by resources available in the organisation. The stringent measures for accountability in place may influence the nature of evaluations likely to be

carried out. The transparency in financial and operational terms to funders and governments (upward accountability) may be coupled with heavy demands for accountability to beneficiaries and civil society more generally (downward accountability) and this may slow down the process of evaluation. Accountability and the practice of good governance is demanded, though, not only of NGOs and micro-finance institutions but also of local and national governments and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank. Less notable, so far, in the region is an explicit demand for the accountability of community-based enterprises, or indeed private sector businesses (Speckbacher et al, 2003).

The amount of resources available may influence the level of an evaluation's rigor or the certainty of its findings. The importance of the programme, existing knowledge about the programme from previous evaluations and the decisions to which the evaluation will contribute are important factors to consider. Very often the available resources (time, money and expertise) will restrict the scope of the evaluation (the number of questions, size of the sample, data collection and analysis options) or influence the choice of evaluation designs. Some organizations have a policy of setting aside a certain percentage of the total programme budget for evaluation (BetterEvaluation, 2014).

Data collection can often represent more than half of the evaluation budget, reducing the sample size can produce significant cost savings. However, there are trade-offs as smaller samples reduce statistical precision of estimates and the level of disaggregation of the analysis (Tilmes Claus, 2006).

Resource usage within the stipulated and planned time may also influence the quality of evaluation in the long run. The increasingly problematic issue of time requirements for

marginalised social groups to be able to participate in M & E of any kind, and hence who can afford to become involved in an M & E process is also not being tackled by the literature, and presumably by the practice that it aims to document. This is of special concern to participatory M & E which by principle does not wish to offer payment so as to ensure maximum legitimacy for the judgment obtained at the end of the process (Chen, 2004).

When evaluations are conducted at the right time, such that they focus on key issues of concern to policy makers and managers, and the results are presented in a user-friendly format, they can provide a highly cost-effective way to improve the performance and impact of development policies, programmes and projects. But evaluations that fail these criteria may produce no useful results even when they are methodologically sound (World Bank, 2004).

Without adequate financial resources, evaluation has greatly diminished impact. Low-quality evaluations make it impossible to create relevant knowledge of sufficient weight to improve organizational learning and influence the decision-making process. In fact, many experts suggest that it would be better to focus on a few high-quality evaluations of genuine relevance to an organization rather than many low-quality evaluations that may end up lying ignored on the desk of some specialized people (Vladmir, 2004). This assertion by Vladmir may be true but it does not tell us how finance resources affect evaluation quality, thus the need to focus the study in that direction.

While designing an M & E system and training can initially be costly and time-consuming, it does not necessarily have to use vast time and financial resources in the long run. If beneficiary community members are trained in self-monitoring or indicator measurement, then the job and the time costs can be distributed. This is in line with Preskill et al (2012) who noted that

representation of key stakeholders is vital. However, this view falls short of explaining how the distribution of job and time costs affects the quality of project evaluation.

Claus (2006) also noted that the challenge for the evaluator and the client is to decide whether it is possible to conduct a quality impact evaluation under the real-world constraints, and to select the strongest possible design within the particular set of budget, time and data constraints. For example: at what point does the sample become too small, or too limited in its coverage to permit sound statistical analysis. This therefore points to the fact that both the client and evaluator affect the quality of the project evaluation, but there is silence on how this occurs hence the reason for undertaking this study.

When communities are empowered to evaluate and determine the value of an intervention, they can take corrective action when need arises and report back on the things that do work and those that do not. They are powerful allies in the evaluators' quest to attain learning and accountability and therefore greater development effectiveness (Catsambas et al, 2013). This view is shared by Preskill et al (2012) who noted that soliciting opinions, interests and priorities of stakeholders is vital in project evaluation. The level of involvement by staff depends on resources available. However, Catsambas et al do not indicate how resources affect the quality of project evaluation, thus the need for this study to answer that question.

Based on the above arguments, and given that project evaluations are planned within an institutional framework, evaluation quality is affected by how evaluation resources are allocated, availed and managed within the institution. Therefore, it is important to study how factors and actors around resource management affect the quality of project evaluation, which is also the reason for undertaking this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the methodology that was used to carry out the study. It presents the research design, study population, sample size, sampling methods, data collection methods and instruments, pretesting of instruments, procedure for data collection, validity and reliability, data management and analysis, measurement of variables, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research design

The study utilized the cross-sectional survey design that used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A cross-sectional design was chosen because the study is exploratory: it allows researchers to compare different variables at the same time, is relatively inexpensive and takes up little time to conduct, good for descriptive analyses and for generation of hypotheses (Olsen, 2001).

In survey research, independent and dependent variables are used to define the scope of study (Nachmias, 1981). In this study, survey methodology helped in measuring variables and examining relationships as recommended by Fowler (1993). Cross-sectional survey design was adopted because it helped the researcher gather data from a sample of a wider population at a particular time and use such data to make inference about the wider population.

3.2 Study population

The study was carried out in Kampala at the head offices of FHI360. The study population included M & E staff, project heads/managers and project officers.

3.3 Sample Size and selection

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), it is impossible to study the whole targeted population and therefore the researcher has to decide on a sampled population. The sample size was determined using Israel (1992) adopted from Yamane's (1967) simplified formula as shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n= sample size

N= population size

e= level of precision (0.05)

Table 1: Number of participants per category

Category	Population	Sample size	Sampling Strategy
Programme managers	6	6	Purposive
M&E staff	16	16	Simple random sampling
Project officers	23	23	Simple random sampling
Total respondents	45	45	

3.4 Sampling Methods

The study used simple random sampling to select M & E staff and project officers. Simple random sampling is a form of selection of respondents which is done in order to avoid bias (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). A list of project staff was sought from the Human Resource Department to help in determining the respondents. Names of respondents of each category was written on pieces of papers and contacted to be involved in the study.

The study used purposive sampling to select six programme managers for the questionnaire since they are specific and known in the organization; and three were selected for in-depth interviews. Sixteen Data management and M & E, and 23 Technical project officers from various projects were interviewed using the likert scale questionnaire. Of these, five M & E and two project officers were further interviewed by way of in-depth interviews.

3.5 Data Collection methods

The study utilized qualitative data collection methods, with a small element of quantitative methods. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires as well as interviews. Secondary data was sourced from reading literature and existing records.

3.5.1 Quantitative methods

Survey method

This involved the use of self-administered questionnaires to respondents in relation to institutional factors that influence the evaluation quality in project management at FHI360. In seeking for quantitative data, a closed ended questionnaire in a scale (five likert) form was used. Questionnaire method was used because it helps to investigate motives and feelings in likert scaling (Creswell, 1994).

3.5.2 Qualitative methods

To obtain qualitative data, the interview method was used.

Interview method

The interview method, specifically in-depth interviews, was used to explore what and how institutional factors influence evaluation quality in project management at FHI360; these were conducted with programme managers and M&E officers. This method took the form of face-to-face interviews that sought to provide the required data as specified above. The interview

method was used because it provides an excellent opportunity to probe and explore questions (Cresswell, 1994).

Document review method

The document review method was used in sourcing for secondary data in all relevant documents in relation institutional factors that influence project evaluation quality. These were sourced from journals, textbooks, evaluation guidelines, reports and other relevant reliable sources.

3.6 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview guide and the document review checklist.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The study used a five-likert scale questionnaire which was administered to project managers, M&E staff members and project officers. The study had one set of questionnaire that was constructed strategically to capture all the necessary information from all categories of respondents in respect to the themes of the study. The questionnaire was administered door-to-door for self-administration since all the respondents are known. The likert scale questions were used since they are very flexible and can be constructed more easily than most other types of attitude scales (Amin, 2005).

3.6.2 Interview guide

Face-to-face interviews with the help of an interview guide were conducted among project managers and selected M & E officers to establish views on the topic under study. The researcher believes that these people can provide rich information with regard to the study because they are at the heart of commissioning project evaluations and manage project resources. Interviews were used, since they are appropriate in providing in-depth data, data required to meet

specific objectives, allow clarity in questioning and are quite flexible compared to questionnaires.

3.6.3 Document review checklist

The study also carried out reviews of existing documents primarily journals, donor evaluation guidelines, evaluation reports and survey reports, management reports, strategic plans, conference briefs and data by other scholars in relation to institutional factors that influence quality of evaluation. This gave an overview of how much has been studied and documented.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The data collection tools were pretested on a smaller number of respondents from each category of the population to ensure that the questions were accurate and clear in line with each objective of the study thus ensuring validity and reliability.

3.7.1 Validity

The study adopted content validity which is the degree to which data collected using particular instruments represents a specific domain of indicators or content of a particular concept. Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on research results. It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study. Therefore, validity looks at how accurately represented are the variables of the study (Mugenda, Mugenda, 2003). To ensure content validity of instruments the researcher constructed the instruments with all the items that measure variables of the study, and the tool was considered valid once data collected from the pre-test answered key aspects of the study. The researcher also consulted the supervisor for proper guidance, pre-tested the instruments and

after pre-testing, ambiguous questions were removed or polished so as to remain with the finest instrument to collect clean data.

3.7.2 Reliability

According to George and Mallery (2003) reliability of 0.6 is acceptable and this refers to the measure of the degree to which research instruments yield consistent results after repeated trials.

3.8 Procedure for data Collection

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from UTAMU to help with introductions to various respondents. After the construction of instruments, the researcher took them to the supervisor for approval and thereafter they were taken for pretesting with selected few respondents. The researcher carried out a pilot run on a participating group in the study. Pretesting was done by picking 10 respondents and giving them the same approved questionnaires. Pretesting helps to know whether respondents interpret phrases and questions as the researcher wants them. It also helps to obtain a general assessment of respondents' ability to perform the required tasks (e.g. recall relevant information, estimate frequency of specific behaviours, etc.) and also helps to obtain ideas for question wording in case rephrasing of the original statements is needed.

3.9 Data Management and Analysis

In the study, the instruments that were used yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. After respondents had answered questionnaires and interviews, raw data was cleaned, sorted and condensed into systematically comparable data. Univariate and multivariate data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS), which helped to summarize the coded data and produce the required statistics in the study.

3.9.1 Quantitative data

In handling all the objectives of the study, the researcher used a computer package SPSS where data was entered, edited, cleaned and sorted. This programme was used to do univariate and bivariate analysis. Uni-variate analysis of these objectives was used to obtain descriptive data in form of means and standard deviations since it was a five-Likert questionnaire and this helped give the general response towards each question in the Likert scale through the mean values. In establishing the relationships among variables, bivariate, multivariate analysis in form of correlation analysis where necessary was used to ascertain the magnitude of effect the dependent variable has on independent variable.

3.9.2 Qualitative data

Thematic data analysis of qualitative data in the three objectives of the study used content analysis where each piece of work answered in the interview guide read through thoroughly to identify themes where it belongs.

3.10 Measurement of variables

The independent variable in the study was institutional factors and dependent variable was evaluation quality. The nominal scale was used in the measurement of variables in a Likert scale format which ranged from 1 to 5 -- strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree and strongly agree respectively.

Conceptualisation of the study

Table 1: Graphic conceptualisation of the study

Key Factor	Concepts	Measurement
Management and leadership strength	Evaluation guidelines	How does the ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines influence the quality of evaluation?
	Activity monitoring and supervision function	How does the frequency of activity supervision influence the quality of project evaluation?
	Stakeholder involvement	How does stakeholder involvement influence evaluation quality?
Staff competence and capacity	Training	How does staff training influence the quality of project evaluation?
	Experience	How does staff experience influence the quality of project evaluation?
	Expertise	How does the level of expertise among staff affect the quality of project evaluation?
	Technology Adoption	How does use of advanced technology affect the quality of project evaluation?
Resource management	Availability	In what ways does resource availability influence project evaluation at FHI360?
	Allocation	In what ways does resource allocation for M&E influence evaluation quality?
	Flow	How does resource flow affect project evaluation quality?
	Usage	How does resource usage within FHI360 affect the quality of project evaluation?
Evaluation Quality	Transparency	Are project evaluations with in FHI360 conducted transparently?
	Utility	Does FHI360 Uganda utilize evaluation findings?
	Timeliness of evaluations	Does FHI360 conduct evaluations in the planned time?
	Independence	Are evaluations conducted independently without influence?
	Credibility	Are project evaluations conducted within FHI360 credible?

The above table shows how the research study was conceived and conceptualised to be able to collect data that answers the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The study examined how institutional factors affect the quality of project evaluations in Non-government organizations with specific reference to FHI360 Uganda. The study adopted three largely qualitative-leaning research objectives which were: to examine the influence of management strength, staff competence as well as resource management on the quality of project evaluation. The study presents descriptive results from questionnaires in form of mean to show the central tendency of responses from the likert scale questions. The study also presents qualitative results from in-depth interviews, in form of quotations and narrative themes as per respondents' views regarding each objective of the study. The study also presents inferential statistics in form of correlations which show the nature of relationship between variables and the magnitude of effect the independent variables has on dependent variable and also tests the hypotheses that were stated in the study. The chapter also presents the response rate, which shows the actual number of respondents that participated in the study from the anticipated number of respondents.

4.2 Response rate

Out of a total number 50 respondents that were expected to participate in the study, 45 respondents actually participated, representing a response rate of 90%. Five staff did not participate in interviews, citing reasons of being busy and not being able to participate in the study. This response rate was well above the 60-70% response rate as recommended by the

Guttmacher Institute (2006), if a study to be considered as well set to deliver satisfactory results. Therefore, the study results can be relied upon for academic and non-academic purposes.

4.3 Presentation of results and discussion

4.4 The influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation

The study examined the influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation within FHI360-Uganda. The variable management strength was looked at in regard to putting in place and enforcing evaluation guidelines, activity monitoring and supervision, stakeholder involvement and the role of an institutional review board. Based on data collected using questionnaires, means were computed in each question to show the mean responses that ranged between 1 and 5 where: 1-2.4= disagreed, 2.5-3.4=neutral, 3.5-5=agree. In in-depth interviews, using content analysis, results were analysed from respondent narratives, relevant to the objectives of the study. Results from quantitative data were triangulated with results from in-depth interviews to better understand how management and leadership influence evaluation quality. Results from quantitative data were computed to obtain means that shows the average responses in each question of the Likert scale, and the results are presented below.

Table 2: Descriptive results on management strength

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
Category of respondent	45	1	3	2.38	.716
ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines and standard operating procedures influences the quality of project evaluation	45	3	5	4.56	.546
The frequency of project activity monitoring and supervision affects the quality of project evaluation	45	3	5	4.42	.583
level of involvement and support of all key project stakeholders including beneficiaries in evaluation activities has an effect on the quality of evaluation	45	3	5	4.40	.688
existence of a functional in-house institutional review board in an organisation has an effect on the quality of project evaluations conducted	45	1	5	3.64	1.069

Management and leadership	45	3	5	4.23	.380
Valid N (listwise)	45				

Table 4: Analysis of various aspects of management strength on the quality of project evaluations

Aspect measured	Management's ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines	Management's commitment to support regular monitoring visits	Involvement and engagement of stakeholders by management	Presence of a functional institutional review board
Agree/Strongly agree	98%	96%	89%	67%
Neutral	2%	4%	11%	13%
Disagree/strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	20%

(N=45)

Further analysis of the aspects of management and leadership indicate that 98% (N=44) of the respondents agreed that the ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines has a stronger influence on the quality of evaluation. Ninety-six per cent (N=43) said activity monitoring and supervision had an effect, 89% (N=40) said stakeholder involvement and 67% (N=30) said existence of an institutional review board had an effect.

Overall, 87% (n=39) agreed that management strength influences evaluation quality, while 13% (n=6) disagreed or were neutral.

The themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews on how management strength influences the quality of evaluation were:

- *Technology adoption and credibility, accuracy*
- *Management support to staff capacity development and credibility, effectiveness*
- *Resource allocation and timely utilization of evaluation findings*
- *Funding sustainability through upward and downward accountability and evaluation.*
- *Enforcement of evaluation guidelines increases accuracy and credibility*

- *Routine monitoring and timeliness, credibility of evaluation findings*
- *Stakeholder involvement fosters transparency, credibility, reliability*
- *Institutional review board enhances credibility*

From the study, it was strongly agreed (Mean=4.56) that the ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines and standard operating procedures influences the effectiveness, reliability and credibility of the evaluation with regard to good evaluator recruitment procedures, unbiased selection process. The implication is that in a situation where management has the capacity and ability to put in place and enforce effective evaluation guidelines, there is more likelihood that the project evaluation process and outcomes is more likely to be credible, and the reverse is true.

The way these themes relate to evaluation quality aspects is elaborated below:

Technology adoption and timeliness, accuracy

The study revealed that management and leadership at FHI360 is responsible for offering logistical support that is needed in M & E activities. For example, the procurement of tablets and phones to collect M & E data has ensured that less time is spent in evaluative data collection, and the result is accurate and timely evaluation results which encourages data use as noted by one respondent thus:

“management has provided resources to be used in monitoring and evaluation for example electronic tablets and phones which increase timeliness and accuracy” (M-3).

Management support to staff capacity development and effectiveness, credibility

Management has always encouraged internal trainings as well as further studies for M & E staff with the ultimate aim of improving on the internal capacity to conduct quality evaluations at FHI360 Uganda, as narrated by respondents thus;

“At least we are always encouraged to go for further studies by the top management and FHI360 allows us time to do that as we work. Even internally here, we always have some trainings here and sometimes M&E staff go for FHI360 meetings and workshops which

bring together M&E staff from different countries and through this, they learn and share experiences which improves their capacity” (M-5).

Therefore, where FHI360 management supports technology adoption and use in M & E and continuous staff development, there is increased accuracy, timeliness and effectiveness of evaluations respectively. Lack of this support and goodwill affects negatively the quality of evaluations in terms of timeliness and accuracy.

Resource allocation and timely utilization of evaluation findings

In the study it was revealed that the involvement of management in the allocation of appropriate resources for monitoring and evaluation activities influences the eventual quality of evaluation activities. For an evaluation activity to be a quality one, enough resources must be appropriated and the role of management is to ensure that this happens timely. If done well, it ensures that evaluations are completed effectively and efficiently, as one of the respondents put it thus;

“...involvement of management enables allocation of appropriate resources that may be key in ensuring that the project is evaluated well to achieve the intended objectives....”
(PO-2).

Management therefore ensures that there is an appropriate budget for project evaluation activities, which affects the effectiveness and timeliness; and this applies to all projects.

Funding sustainability through upward and downward accountability using evaluation results

FHI360 Uganda management influences the evaluation process due to the fact that donors are interested in project evaluation reports, to learn from their investments, how the activities were undertaken, the impact of their support and also see whether the intended project purpose was achieved, as the initial basis of awarding funds. It is management’s responsibility to account

back through evaluation reports that are of quality, and demonstrate value for money. This has always prompted management to carefully hire skilled and experienced evaluation consultants as well as M & E staff. It was also found out that management is focused on organisational sustainability in terms of funding, and that evaluation outcomes determine whether FHI360 wins another award or not, and thus management strives to have a hand in evaluation activities. It does not leave it to the evaluators alone, but gives guidance on where the focus should be.

“FHI360 management knows that it is its responsibility to account for the funds that are given to the organisation, and this is a major basis for further funding. That is why when it’s time for evaluations, there is intense pressure from management, they want to have a hand in selecting the research and evaluation consultants, approve the terms of reference and in my opinion, and this has a bearing on the quality of evaluation.” (PM-2)

“When we are implementing a project, we do it as we plan to win the next one. So we have to ensure that the report we submit to USAID reflects what is actually on the ground” (PM-1).

Enforcement of evaluation guidelines increases accuracy and credibility

The majority of respondents reported that FHI360 provides monitoring and evaluation procedures and guidelines that are supposed to be followed in monitoring and evaluation processes. However, the weakness noted was the ability to enforce these guidelines. If these guidelines are enforced well, then the quality of evaluations is likely to be enhanced and the reverse is true, as one respondent said:

“....project monitoring and evaluation guidelines exist but have not yet been effectively enforced across all projects. We have seen that where these guidelines are enforced, the quality of evaluation is always high in terms of getting accurate information” (PM-1).

FHI360 has everything in place in regards to guidelines for monitoring and evaluation, and the rest remains with the managers. The gap so far is enforcement of the guidelines for more credible results” (M-1).

Therefore, some of the guidelines in place are not enforced and this compromises the quality of evaluations in terms of effectiveness, credibility, accuracy and utilization. The guidelines ensure that all efforts are put in place to ensure that data quality is ensured by monitoring and evaluation staff, this to a great extent makes the results accurate and reliable. Therefore, if management enforces adherence to these standards and guidelines, the quality of evaluation will be enhanced, and the reverse is true.

It was also revealed that the available standard evaluation guidelines and standard operating procedures are in line with international standards, although they are not strictly followed. Such guidelines are meant to ensure that there is uniformity in the way monitoring, evaluation and research are conducted. This also is the benchmark for setting standards and clear terms of reference for both FHI360 monitoring and evaluation staff and consultants, which leads to recruitment of quality and capable staff in the whole process.

“.....guidelines are a means rather than an end to achieving top quality evaluations...”
(M-1).

This means that the enforcement part is the most critical part if the evaluation is to be credible and as such FHI360 has largely tried to enforce these guidelines for example, ensuring that all stakeholders’ interests are represented, which increases the credibility of the evaluation.

Ninety-six per cent (n=43) respondents agreed that the level and extent of activity monitoring and supervision in institutions largely affects the reliability and credibility of project evaluations

in non-government organizations (mean=4.42). This implies that when project activities are regularly and effectively monitored, then most errors in the project implementation process are likely to be identified and rectified. Regular and effective activity monitoring allows full participation of staff in the project, thereby increasing their understanding of the project in detail. This will ensure that key performance indicators in the monitoring process are emphasized routinely. These are the same indicators upon which evaluations will be conducted, and the theme here was:

Routine monitoring and credibility of evaluation findings

In-depth interviews revealed that the frequency of activity monitoring in the project evaluation process matters with regard to the quality in the evaluation process. Some respondents explained that:

“where management has provided the logistics for routine monitoring, the quality evaluation has been good because it finds when the staff know the beneficiaries by location, they can tell that they have benefited from the project or not and results are in most cases accurate” (PO-2).

“...the more staff are involved in activity monitoring process, the more they understand the project outcomes, and when it comes to evaluation, they know what to measure they are likely to oversee or conduct a more effective evaluation” (M-5).

This therefore implies that the frequency of activity monitoring helps staff to understand the project better; know which activities were carried out; whether all beneficiaries are getting services or not; the location of clients which saves time and because you can only measure the effect of a project when you are sure that the intervention reached the intended beneficiaries.

This makes an evaluability assessment unnecessary, which would otherwise have cost time and money.

Activity monitoring has ensured that implementing partners (IPs) do what is right and that there is downward accountability. This essentially has an effect on the reliability and credibility of the evaluation results as one respondents explained that:

“...for example the implementing partners can’t forge activities and reports because they know that we shall go to the ground and supervise...” (M-3).

“...it doesn’t end after the activity, that is, when you have finished conducting the activity. There is also after activity monitoring. I have finished the activity, so what?” (M-1).

The above quotations give an indication that where management supports project supervision, then credibility and accuracy of evaluation are enhanced, which promotes learning from activity implementation, and the reverse is true.

The level of activity monitoring, including post-activity monitoring, is therefore checked by going to the clients or beneficiaries to verify whether they actually participated and benefited from the activities as reported by partners. So this compels partners to produce reports that reflect what is actually on the ground. It is important to note that some data which informs the evaluation comes from monitoring reports and periodic assessments, thus management of FHI360 ensures that such monitoring visits are approved in the work plans, implemented and tracked.

It was also strongly agreed that the nature and level of involvement and support of all key project stakeholders including beneficiaries in evaluation activities has an effect on the effectiveness,

reliability and credibility of the project evaluation (Mean=4.40). The involvement of all stakeholders in the project monitoring process is important towards the evaluation process and the likely outcomes expected from the project. Involvement of all stakeholders in the evaluation process implies that everyone's views are considered in the evaluation plan, which may lead to the achievement of project objectives. Involving stakeholders in the evaluation enhances credibility of findings, the methodology and scope of the evaluation are agreed on, and there is transparency in the evaluation process. It also ensures that all stakeholder concerns and priorities are catered for, which increases the possibility of utilising the evaluation results. The theme identified was:

Stakeholder involvement fosters transparency, credibility, reliability

It is therefore less likely to have forged results if the evaluation involves all key stakeholders, as one respondent noted:

“When all stakeholders are brought on board to participate in the evaluation, it is always hard to bribe the evaluator especially if it is an external evaluator. Therefore, in such instances, the results are credible and reliable” (M-3).

This therefore means that where FHI360 management see to it that all key stakeholders of the project are involved in the M & E processes, the quality in terms of credibility is often unquestionable and as such the results are easily accepted by all. This also leads to good programming and improvement in future programme designs and implementation.

In-depth interviews revealed that participation of all key stakeholders in the evaluation process is an important aspect in ensuring all the needs of all stakeholders are put into consideration and

addressed. However, not all stakeholders are involved in the evaluation process or their views considered, especially the beneficiaries. In fact, one of the respondents noted that:

“Generating and interpreting results together, and plan dissemination together with a clear plan on next steps ensures that the results are of quality and acceptable” (M-1).

“...we don't usually involve beneficiaries in the actual evaluation process of our projects... they are not part of the team that evaluates, neither do we consult them on how best evaluations should be done....” (PO-1).

This therefore implies that whereas the involvement of all stakeholders in the evaluation process is important, some of the stakeholders are sometimes not involved in the process which may compromise the quality of the evaluation activity since some of the interests from such stakeholders may not be addressed. For results to be acceptable, they should be credible.

Several respondents reported that collaboration plays an important role in both implementation and evaluation of the project. When stakeholders agree on assessment procedures and parameters as well as respond to study questions, participate in interviews, it gives a rich blend and depth to the results of the evaluation. When beneficiaries understand what the project is about and how effectiveness of the programme is measured, it enables them to give useful feedback that produces quality evaluation results since beneficiaries are the major point of impact measurement. Thus management must ensure that all stakeholders are involved to increase evaluation credibility.

“You can only do a credible evaluation if you are sure that the project activities reached the intended beneficiary. So it is always important to do close monitoring and also have all stakeholders including beneficiaries in evaluation process” (M-4).

Therefore, if FHI360 involves beneficiaries too in the evaluation process, not just as respondents, it would result into more credible and rich evaluations, but it is to a great extent not the case now at FHI360.

Further still, 67% (n=30) of respondents agreed that the existence of a functional in-house institutional review board has an effect on the quality of project evaluations within an organization (mean=3.64). The study revealed that FHI360 has a review board that is responsible for assessing whether ethical considerations relating to rights of respondents are catered for. This acts as a quality assurance control and assurance measure of the competence of evaluators on matters of research ethics. The theme that emerged was:

Institutional review board enhances credibility

For evaluation findings to be utilised, they must be credible. Therefore the review board provides support to the evaluation team on evaluation and research ethics, and helps to minimize errors that might arise from incompetence of staff in relation to data collection from respondents. It helps to strengthen ethical standards to do with protection of persons involved in the evaluation, and it is this knowledge and adherence to the ethical standards which protect respondents involved in the evaluation that encourages them to give credible information and not to conceal any facts related to project implementation. If an evaluation takes place without review of the ethical committee, the results may not be as credible as they would otherwise have been. One respondent noted that:

“Institutional review boards have no direct effect on the evaluation results since they don’t deal with methodology and rigour, but they are very instrumental because we normally orient our data collectors on research ethics which involve how to approach respondents, reading body language and act accordingly, respecting respondents which in a way give respondents confidence to give the data collectors factual detailed information” (M-3)

Another respondent explained that:

“...the existence of the review board at FHI360 has helped to keep the research and evaluation processes in check, ensure that respondents are free to provide information that can be relied on which guarantee credible and reliable evaluation results....” (M-4)

Therefore, the existence of an institutional review board which is in charge of the ethical aspects of dealing with respondents influences the quality of data collected for evaluation and ultimately the evaluation results. At FHI360 Uganda level, management ensures that all research and most assessments and evaluations go through this review board which influences the quality of information collected for evaluation purposes, and the results therefrom.

Testing hypothesis one: Management strength can influence the quality of evaluation.

To test the relationship between management, leadership strength and the quality of evaluation a correlation analysis was run, and below are the results.

Table 5: Correlation between management strength and quality of evaluations

Correlations			
		Management strength	Evaluation Quality
Management and leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.871
	N	45	45
Evaluation Quality	Pearson Correlation	.025	1

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.871	
	N	45	45

In the study as reflected in the table above, there is a positive but weak relationship between management and leadership strategy and the quality of evaluation. The obtained correlation coefficient of .025, explains the positive but weak nature of relationship that exists between the two variables which implies that management strength of FHI360 has a small effect on the quality of project evaluation. Thus when management effectively enforces evaluation guidelines, involves all stakeholders in evaluation processes, supports periodic activity monitoring and supervision and ensures that evaluation concepts are reviewed by the FHI360 review board, the quality of evaluation will be improved, but to a small extent.

4.5 The influence of staff competence and capacity on the quality of project evaluation

The study examined how the competence of staff influences the quality of project evaluation. Quantitative data was computed to obtain means that show the average and central tendency responses in each question of the Likert scale that were asked to respondents. The variable staff competence was looked at with regard to training, experience, operational staff competence, ability to design comprehensive evaluation terms of reference and utilization of evaluation findings. The means computed in each question to show the mean responses ranged between 1-5 where: 1-2.4= disagreed, 2.5-3.4=neutral, 3.5-5=agree. In interviews, using content analysis, results were analysed thematically. From in-depth interviews, narrations that were relevant to the objectives of the study were captured and presented. Descriptive results are presented first and then results from interviews.

Table 6: Descriptive results on influence of staff competence on the quality of evaluation

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The quality of the evaluation is determined by competence of the staff involved in the evaluation process in terms of the training and experience.	45	2	5	4.51	.626
Programme operational staff responsible and accountable for managing evaluations have a great influence on the quality of evaluations in NGOs.	45	2	5	4.09	.763
Ability to develop evaluation terms of reference has a great effect on the eventual quality of project evaluation.	45	3	5	4.18	.716
Having experienced M&E staff results into good evaluative information for the organization which helps it to make effective decisions.	45	2	5	4.09	.874
Valid N (listwise)	45				

Table 7: Analysis of influence of various aspects of staff competence on the quality of project evaluations

Aspect measured	Competence of staff	Programme operational staff	Evaluation terms of reference	Utilization of findings/decision making
Agree/Strongly agree	98%	80%	82%	84%
Neutral	0%	18%	18%	7%
Disagree/strongly disagree	2%	2%	0%	9%

(N=45)

On average, 87% (n=39) agreed that staff competence influences evaluation quality, while 13% (n=6) disagreed or were neutral. Results in Table 7 above show that all aspects have an influence on the quality of evaluation.

Study findings reveal that 98% (n=44) of respondents agreed that the quality of the evaluation is determined by competence of the staff involved in the evaluation process in terms of the training and experience (mean=4.51). This implies that the competence of staff members involved in the

monitoring process is important in determining the quality of evaluations in the project. The level of experience and training determine the level of competence the staff exhibits during the evaluation process and this largely determines the quality of evaluation since experience is used in streamlining or dealing with any challenges that may come through in the evaluation process. Therefore, planning for research and evaluations needs a lot of creativity and technical know-how which can only be achieved if staff are highly skilled and experienced.

The emerging themes from in-depth interviews under staff competence and capacity include:

- *Staff training and accuracy, efficiency and credibility of evaluation findings*
- *Staff experience, exposure and credibility, efficiency of project evaluations*
- *Staff expertise in evaluation leads to Independence, timeliness, and credibility*
- *Evaluation terms of reference and accuracy, effectiveness, efficiency, credibility.*

The themes are explained as below.

Staff training and accuracy, effectiveness and credibility of evaluation findings

From the in-depth interviews, the majority of respondents noted that training in monitoring, evaluation and research processes is key in ensuring the quality of evaluation. One weakness that was identified was that most of the M & E staff are not multi-sectoral, and are not research oriented, and the number of M & E staff is small, as stated thus:

“... some of our evaluations are complex require personnel that are diverse in their thinking, must be independent and innovative in mind. So without competence in terms of training and experience one may find it hard to do this...” (PM-2).

“we need multi-sectoral M&E team, but most are fixed to one area. There is also need for research oriented staff to manage not only M&E but also be innovative and inform program improvement” (PM-1).

“M&E people are so overwhelmed in research, reports, quality control and assurance, managing data etc. There is need to increase their numbers for better effectiveness”.
(PM-2).

This implies that at FHI360 Uganda, quality evaluations are a result of experienced staff with expertise and training in evaluation methodologies, but need to be trained more to be research-focused for even better monitoring and evaluation.

Staff experience, exposure and credibility, efficiency of project evaluation

The majority of respondents reported that experienced staff bring knowledge from elsewhere and external expertise on how to conduct evaluation tasks, for example technical report writing, designing monitoring and evaluation system which enable the organization to have an effective monitoring and evaluation system, which is directly linked to quality of information derived therefrom. Education qualification, training and experience ensure that staff have the theoretical and practical knowledge of accomplishing technical evaluation tasks. Without skills, the project may lack the correct understanding and execution from paper to the actual field. One respondent said:

“Staff that are experienced and trained especially from other international organisations and institutions bring knowledge and new ways of doing things to FHI360. So we have staff who come in and are very much experienced in the field of M&E, so these are a resource to FHI because they can accomplish tasks with minimal supervision.” (PM-1)

“.... recruiting staff with experience is good because they come in and mentor junior M&E staff. This ensures that even when they leave, capacity to quality control and assure

is built within FHI360 so that the junior M&E staff gradually become competent to conduct studies, evaluations and project assessments independently” (PM-3)

This therefore implies that with experienced M&E staff, the effectiveness, accuracy and credibility of evaluations is improved. Additionally, it improves learning culture from evaluation findings.

The study revealed that staff competence is very vital in relation to the efficiency in evaluation. Only competent staff can ably conduct an evaluability assessment to ascertain whether the evaluation is warranted or not, or to determine what type of project appraisal should be conducted. One respondent noted thus:

“Understanding what was done on the ground informs responsible people whether there should be an assessment or an evaluation. if M&E findings reveal that the project was off track, then an assessment is done. So M&E staff must have skills in behavioural theories” (M-5).

“It is critical to have competent staff because before you do an evaluation, you have to understand whether there is need for the evaluation in the first place. So staff competence is key” (M-1).

Therefore, this clearly indicates that with competent staff, the level of efficiency, usefulness and credibility of findings is enhanced.

It was revealed that most of the monitoring and evaluation staff have vast experience and are highly educated and eager to learn more from their work or projects. This has helped produce good quality reports and data even without trainings from the organization. It has also helped project evaluations, for example mid-term evaluations, to be done by internal staff with little

support from external consultants, which saves time and money for FHI360 and the organisation retains its credibility as an efficient organisation.

“Staff competence has helped project evaluations e.g. midterm evaluations are done as a team which enhances quality” (M-4).

“...they are able to select the right study designs for different kinds of evaluations, be able to assess evaluator proposals, supervise and advise appropriately. Short of these, the credibility and reliability of evaluation will be compromised” (PM-3).

Therefore, the choice of FHI360 to hire experienced Programme as well as M & E staff to support and/or conduct evaluations independently has a direct effect on the credibility of evaluative work done with in FHI360 Uganda.

Skilled and competent staff influences the utilization and management of the evaluation information. Some staff may choose to pick out only positive information that appeals to them, put it in the evaluation report and rubbish everything else that seems negative. Therefore, it is important to always have competent staff, of integrity who understand that results are not meant to be just positive, but that negative results are good to capture and include in the evaluation report for programme improvement.

“If you don't have staff of integrity, who know that whatever comes out from the evaluation must be reported, you end up having good reports on paper when the actual work in the field is having no impact. That is why it is important to have staff who are competent enough to report even negative results, because they are facts which can inform implementation or project redesigning” (R-PO3).

From the above, competent staff ensure that evaluation reports are not falsified to portray that the project is on track when actually that is not the case. It requires a skilled and competent M & E professional to report such facts, which make the quality of the evaluation report itself unquestionable.

Further still, 80% (n=36) of the respondents agreed that operational staff who are responsible and accountable for managing evaluations have a great influence on the quality of evaluations in NGOs (mean=4.09). The main theme from the in-depth interviews was:

Staff expertise and independence, timeliness of evaluations

Operational staff members with the appropriate skills and in the evaluation process help an organisation to quickly hire consultants, release money for evaluation activities and easily identify loopholes in the evaluation process. They are also key in the contracting processes and have a bearing on the independence of the consultant hired or selected.

“.....operational staff who have been exposed to evaluations are a big asset because they easily know what to look out for when these consultants submit their applications. For example, the cost, scope and the time the consultant is proposing. So they know how long an evaluation should take given the number of districts, the beneficiaries and finances proposed.....” (PM-1).

“...FHI360 Uganda is slowly moving into qualitative methodologies because they provide deeper information for program improvement in support of quantitative methods, therefore all M&E staff and even external consultants are expected to know these methodologies” (M-2).

This therefore means that if operational staff who are responsible for commissioning evaluations are not competent enough, they will not be able to assess proposals correctly in terms of time and finance, which may lead to wrong choice of evaluators, most likely those known to them and they end up with poor work.

In-depth interviews revealed that programme and operational staff, involved in making key monitoring and evaluation decisions can have a big influence on the quality of evaluations, as one respondent explained:

“..... for example, on one of the projects, monitoring tools are designed by the monitoring and evaluation unit and approved by the technical committee. Comprising of 6(six) members who are not technical in Monitoring and evaluation and one (1) Monitoring and evaluation advisor.it is possible that the team can easily over power the Monitoring and evaluation advisor and fail to include major Monitoring and evaluation decisions.....” (M-2).

Therefore, where the committee has people who are not well knowledgeable in M&E but have to make decisions on when and how the evaluations will take place, the quality of the outcomes will be compromised if they do not listen to the technical person.

It was also revealed that operational staff are also in charge of administration and handle the contracting and logistics for all activities both for FHI360 staff as well as consultants hired to conduct research, assessments and evaluations for FHI360. Thus they determine the timeliness in which activities are conducted and in the event that they delay to provide transport, pay consultants or hire research assistants and consultants, it means that the time dimension of M&E will be affected. It should be noted that evaluation findings are time-bound and more useful at

certain times and irrelevant later. Therefore, if an evaluation is to be conducted in a timely fashion, then the relevant operational staff must ensure that logistics are prepared and availed as and when required.

“In cases where we use external evaluators, the administrative department which includes finance must ensure that funds and other logistics are processed early. If they delay, then situations on the ground may also change and you collect data different from what you would have collected if it was done early. Community programs have a challenge that situations change very fast, so you need to collect data before things change if the information is to be useful” (M-3).

Therefore, operational staff in FHI360 work together with programme staff to ensure that the right resources are allocated timely, disbursed to the right evaluation consultant or team and this lead to increased utilityreliable and timely evaluations conducted.

Study findings reveal that 82% (N=37) of respondents agreed that the nature of evaluation terms of reference (TORs) has a great effect on the eventual quality of evaluation in non-government organizations (mean=4.18). This implies that the terms of reference for the evaluation greatly determine quality of outcome of the evaluation process. In the study, it was revealed that TORs are what potential external evaluators (consultants), review and determine how to respond to the evaluation requirements of a project or programme. The main theme emerging out of the in-depth interviews is:

Evaluation terms of reference and accuracy, effectiveness, efficiency, credibility

“...if for instance the objectives, purpose, time frame, preferred methods or scope is not clear, the consultant may just go ahead and execute the evaluation, and ends up bringing wrong information, so that is why it is important for M&E staff as well as the project managers must be skilled in evaluations and developing good TORs...” (PM-2)

“With wrong TORs, the data collected and findings cannot be trusted used because they may not relate to the project outcomes or scope.” (PM-3)

Therefore, it is important that internal staff of FHI360 have the ability to develop and/or review evaluation terms of reference that guide the evaluation process from start to the end of the evaluation. Failure to have this done will result in poor quality work because the consultant hired or the internal team will be following wrong or poor terms of reference, which may lead to collecting data that is not linked to project objectives.

Poorly formulated terms of reference are significant towards the quality of evaluations because they determine the parameters to measure. If they are designed poorly, then results may also be poor and this in effect means that the results of the evaluation will be poor, as another respondent noted:

“...what the terms of reference tell that consultant/evaluator to measure is what he or she will measure. So it is very important that the terms of reference are properly designed to cover the goal and objectives of the study.” (M-3)

Therefore, the ability of staff to formulate good evaluation terms of reference will lead to a reliable, timely and accurate evaluation report, which yields information that can be used by FHI360 to make programmatic decisions, and the reverse is also true.

In the study, 84% (N=38) of the respondents agreed that the quality of evaluation with competent staff results into good information for the organization to make effective decisions. Information delivered by the evaluation can be used to serve many purposes. A successful project evaluation may therefore be measured by the utilization of the information from it (mean=4.09). This implies that the competence among staff members determines the quality of information used and obtained in the evaluation process.

The key theme from in-depth interviews is:

Staff experience enhances credibility, utilization of evaluation findings

It was found out that utilization of monitoring and evaluation findings is necessary for learning to take place. If the monitoring and evaluation unit recommends a change in a way of working or implementing specific elements of the project and the recommendations are implemented, the monitoring and evaluation team has a task of reassessing for the results of the new methodology and learn from the impact it creates. Similarly, if the recommendations are not implemented by the project implementation team, learning may not take place.

In the study, it was revealed that utilization of evaluation findings has helped the project staff appreciate monitoring and evaluation and also understand the importance of monitoring their project. It has also helped the programme staff to be outcome-oriented and aim at achieving their deliverables, as stated in the project objectives.

“Evaluation results at FHI360 are very important and are given priority because we have a culture of using data to improve our programs. So the IPs know this and we continue funding to them based on technical quality as well as data quality” (PO-2)

“.... implementing staff are expected to use the data they collect and we also collect the same data from them and the beneficiaries, so because of this, whenever there is an assessment, staff are focusing on how it will be used and this leads to good quality data collection. This is because they know we are going to use the same data to do reliability tests which may land them in problems” (PO-1).

Thus, the focus of M & E staff on utilization of findings from assessments and evaluations has led to collection of quality and hence reliable because we cannot rely/implement based on wrong information. The M & E staff involved should also have the skill of stakeholder engagement if the evaluation is to be utilised as stated by one respondent, thus:

“the translation of results into use is influenced by how together you work with partners from commissioning, developing TORs, interpretation and report writing” (M-1)

Therefore, for an organisation to have quality project evaluation, it requires competent staff who are multi-skilled to handle any eventualities. It is an area where FHI360 Uganda and other NGOs must invest in.

Testing hypothesis two: Staff competence has an influence on the quality of project evaluation

Results from a correlation analysis between staff competence and evaluation quality were obtained and results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Correlation between staff competence and evaluation quality

Correlations			
		Evaluation quality	Staff competence and capacity
Evaluation quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.596**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	45	45
Staff competence	Pearson Correlation	.596**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	45	45

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results in the table above show a strong, positive and significant relationship between staff competence and evaluation quality. The correlation coefficient of 0.596(**) was obtained to explain the strong positive relationship that exists between the two variables. From the correlation coefficients, in a situation where M & E staff are well trained and have experience, programme and operational staff are skilled, evaluation terms of reference are of quality and focus is on data utilization, there is more likelihood that there will be quality evaluations.

4.6 The influence of resource management on the quality of project evaluation

The study examined the influence of resource management on the quality of project monitoring and evaluation. The variable resource management was looked in relation with resource availability and allocation, timely resource utilization, wasting resources on unproductive activities and self-monitoring by beneficiaries. Results from questionnaires were obtained and were triangulated with results from interviews, and the findings are presented below.

Table 9: Descriptive results on Resource Management

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Resource availability and allocation with in institutions influences the quality of project monitoring and evaluations.	45	3	5	4.47	.548
Resource usage within the stipulated and planned time influences the quality of evaluation in the long run.	45	2	5	3.91	.848
Failure to adjust projects and programmes with early signs of problems affects the quality of project evaluation	45	1	5	3.64	1.209
if beneficiary community members are trained in self monitoring or indicator measurement the job in time and cost can be distributed	45	2	5	3.82	.834
Valid N (listwise)	45				

Table 10: Analysis of various aspects of resource management on the quality of project evaluations

Aspect measured	Resource availability and allocation	Timely resource utilization	Resource wastage on unproductive activities	Self-monitoring

Agree/Strongly agree	98%	73%	60%	69%
Neutral	2%	20%	16%	24%
Disagree/strongly disagree	0%	7%	24%	7%

(N=45)

From the above results, 75% (N=34) of the respondents agreed that resource management has an influence on evaluation quality, while 25% (N=11) were either neutral or disagreed.

From in-depth interviews, the main themes that emerged included:

- *Resource flow and timeliness, accuracy of evaluation findings*
- *Resource availability and effectiveness, transparency of project evaluation*
- *Resource availability, staff capacity and timeliness, credibility, utility*
- *Resource allocation and rigour, credibility, efficiency, timeliness*
- *Beneficiary involvement and credibility, timeliness, reliability.*

In the study, 98% (N=44) of the respondents agreed that resource availability and allocation with at FHI360 influences the quality of project evaluations in non-governmental organizations in Uganda (Mean=4.47). This means that when there are appropriate resources to facilitate the process of evaluation in all project activities, the evaluation is more likely to be effective and this may affect the quality of evaluations conducted in the project life cycle.

A detailed description and analysis of the emergent themes above is presented below:

Resource flow and timeliness, use, accuracy of evaluation findings

It was found out that resource management is an important aspect towards the evaluation quality, in that where resource allocation and flow is timely and adequate, the quality of the evaluation outcomes is normally good. At FHI360, sometimes resource management and flow has some challenges which affect the assessments and evaluations, as one respondent elaborated thus;

“...projects have a limited time scope, so delay in release of funds for evaluators leads to loss of time, which leads to late submission of the evaluation reports by consultants and sometimes when the findings have become meaningless or cannot be used” (PM-1)

When funds are released late, yet the evaluation has certain timelines, it causes the evaluation team to do things hurriedly, skip certain steps like following ethical code, which later affect the quality of the evaluation. In some cases, the monitoring and evaluation budget is not well articulated and in many cases, the monitoring and evaluation budget is dependent on the project leadership.

“...because we have deadlines to beat, sometimes the consultants collect data very quickly, just to beat the deadline, with less emphasis on the quality of evaluation or assessment itself. Therefore, because the consultant is working to finish, they may write poor reports” (M5).

“We have had situations where we got forged data from data collectors and the reason they gave was that we had given them tight deadlines for the household survey which was an annual assessment. From our side, finance released the funds late yet we couldn't also adjust the submission deadline.....and on top of that, we are few with many sites to look at assess” (M-1).

Therefore, this clearly shows that even when evaluation funds are available but released late, there is likelihood of having a poor-quality evaluation, because data collectors will not give adequate thought, thoroughness and time to data collection and data fraud will be witnessed.

At FHI360 Uganda, monitoring and evaluation budgets are made available and are separate from other project activities, in accordance with donor guidelines. However, some respondents noted that in some cases, these budgets are not well elaborated to the teams, which is not good practice.

“USAID is our major donor and it is a requirement that the monitoring and evaluation budget must be between 10 – 15% of the overall budget” (PM-2).

“...the M&E budget is not known to the entire M&E team, so this makes it hard for us to plan, and we end up just following the work plan since the budget is part of program activities” (M-5).

The above quotation clearly indicates that even before project inception, resources for monitoring and evaluation are already catered for, but issues arise in the operational processes of making the funds known, available and disbursed timely for M & E activities.

Resource availability affects timeliness, accuracy, transparency

Additionally, the amount of resources affects the quality of evaluations because it determines the quality of staff hired or consultant to conduct the evaluation (highly-skilled staff M&E professionals are expensive to hire), competence in determining the study design, level of stakeholder engagement. Where the budget is small, you end up hiring less qualified staff to conduct the assessments and evaluations, and in most cases, they lack some competencies as noted by some respondents below:

“...when you have a small budget, it means that you can only hire few and probably low quality evaluation team members who may not be up to the task” (PM-1).

“FHI360 has enough money for M&E in the budget but has not adequately staffed the M&E department. So in some projects like mine, you find only one M&E person doing knowledge management, research, learning assisted by the data manager. You can't expect much quality with few M&E staff on a big project” (PM-2).

“Experienced M&E professionals are expensive to find and if you don't allocate enough money for competent M&E teams, you may end up having sub-standard work or take

longer time. It is better to have bigger research, monitoring and evaluation budgets if you are to hire quality people” (PM-3).

Resource allocation and rigour, credibility, efficiency, timeliness

Thus FHI360 allocates enough funds for M & E, is able to hire good consultants for research and evaluations but many times, resources have been too limited to allow the use of large-scale qualitative methodologies in research and evaluation.

It was also reported that resource availability determines the nature of evaluation design that is employed to conduct evaluations. For example, most projects suffer a lot in qualitative evaluations because resources and budgets do not allow for explicitness and rigours that produce quality qualitative results, given the budgets available. The resources available do not allow enough qualitative monitoring and evaluation to take place yet it has become more and more important today.

“...resources are very critical, for example without enough resources, you cannot hire a qualitative evaluator because it needs too much time, concentration and effort, yet it is very rich” (M-5).

Therefore, in FHI360, resources affect the quality of evaluation in terms of rigour and methodology, i.e. it is not easy to employ qualitative methods and evaluators because they are expensive, which leads to evaluations that are not as informative as would be, hence limiting the utilization of findings.

Study results indicate that 73% (N=33) of the respondents were in agreement that resource usage within the stipulated and planned time may also influence the quality of evaluation in the long run (mean=3.91). This implies that when the available resources are utilized effectively and

appropriately, quality standards may be achieved. This allows acquiring of the right human resources and other resources that must be used in the project life cycle so as to pave the way for quality evaluations. The implication is that activities will take place in the stipulated time which will make the project evaluability permissible. Therefore, if activities are not conducted on time, the project may fail the evaluability assessment as the beneficiaries will not have been exposed to the project intervention long enough to be assessed.

In-depth interviews revealed that using resources at the right time has a great impact on the quality of evaluations, as one of respondents asserts:

“...resources are only effective when they are used in the right time for the right objective, so that the intended results are achieved (PO-2).

This implies that if resources are not used within the stipulated time, there are less expectation of results. This also takes into account resources that are needed for activity implementation, i.e. when they are not released in time it affects activity implementation and evaluability of the project. An effective evaluation system is supposed to assess for effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, among others.

In the study, it was revealed that with the availability and/or allocation of enough resources, it has been possible for FHI360 to build the capacity of Monitoring and Evaluation staff who are the focal persons for project evaluation activities. This reduces costs on external evaluators, and the organization is able to hire enough data collectors, something that enables FHI360 to conduct research, assessments and evaluations in a timely manner, as stated by respondents, thus:

“Availability of the M&E budget has enabled several M&E staff to go training, FHI360 has sponsored some to attend trainings and M&E workshops in other countries. So with

this skill and exposure, we are sure that they can conduct evaluations themselves and we don't have to hire consultants who need so much money. So in a way, resources enable us to build internal capacity but also save time and money which we would spend on external evaluators” (M-4).

“We are able to hire enough data collectors for large-scale surveys which saves time and enables us to beat deadlines, so resources are very crucial...” (M-2).

The above quotation indicates that with allocation and availability of enough resources, capacity is built internally and FHI360 Uganda is able to hire enough data collectors which reduces cost and time respectively.

Beneficiary involvement and credibility, timeliness, reliability

Sixty per cent (N=27) of respondents agreed that failure to adjust projects and programmes with early signs of problems, and wasting resources on unnecessary or unproductive activities affects the quality of project evaluation (mean=3.64). Failure to adjust projects and programmes to only project activities that are essential and contribute to the attainment of project core objectives and goals has a direct bearing on the evaluation quality. The project has to be effectively and efficiently implemented and these two are tenets of quality in monitoring and evaluation. It actually means that if adherence is not done, you are going to waste time and resources measuring the effect of unproductive activities, which will have no meaning. It would be better if efforts were directed towards activities that directly impact the beneficiaries.

Additionally, 69% (N=31) of the respondents agreed that if beneficiary community members are trained in self-monitoring and/or indicator measures, then the job in time and cost of evaluation can be distributed, saving vital resources in terms of time and money (Mean=3.82). This

therefore means that if beneficiaries are trained in indicator measurement, FHI360 gets quality information from the beneficiaries, using less time and the information is more reliable than information got from third parties. One respondent noted:

“For the Wash project, we did a midterm using beneficiaries themselves. We formed water committees at village level and had a chairperson. So in the evaluation we could just call and ask them how many homes had built toilets, tippy taps etc. through their chairperson. This saved us time and money and given that the chairpersons were composed of a local leader, religious leader, parish representative and a community health worker, we got very credible information on time, and very cheaply using phone calls” (M-1).

This means that beneficiary involvement is very critical in the credibility and timeliness of project assessments and evaluation. While not many projects within FHI360 Uganda have used this approach, it is very feasible.

Testing hypothesis Three: Resource management affects the quality of project evaluation.

Results from a correlation analysis between resource management and quality of project evaluation and results are presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Correlation between resource management and the quality of project evaluation

Correlations			
		Resource management	Evaluation quality
Resource management	Pearson Correlation	1	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.354
	N	45	45
Evaluation quality	Pearson Correlation	.141	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.354	
	N	45	45

In the study, as indicated in the table above there is a positive significant relationship between resource management and quality of project evaluation in NGOs. The obtained correlation coefficient of 0.141 explains the weak nature of relationship that exists between these variables. This implies that it is in a situation where resources for the evaluation process are available, used on time, where resources are not wasted on unproductive activities and where beneficiaries are trained in self-monitoring, there is little effect on the quality of evaluation will be improved in relation to accuracy of data, timeliness and cost of evaluation activities.

Table 12: Relationships between variables

Correlations ^a					
		Management and leadership	Staff competence and capacity	Resource management	Evaluation quality
Management and leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.051	.408**	.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.738	.005	.871
Staff competence and capacity	Pearson Correlation	.051	1	.151	.596**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.738		.321	.000
Resource management	Pearson Correlation	.408**	.151	1	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.321		.354
Evaluation quality	Pearson Correlation	.025	.596**	.141	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.871	.000	.354	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
a. Listwise N=45					

From the above table, it is evident that each of the variables has an influence on the quality of evaluations at FHI360, but staff competence has the greatest influence on evaluation quality with

a coefficient of 0.596**. Therefore, improvement in the competence and quality of staff will most likely lead to better-quality project evaluation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study examined how institutional factors affect the quality of project evaluations in non-governmental organizations. The study examined the influence of management strength, staff competence and resource management on the quality of project evaluation. This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study and these are presented according to the findings on the basis of objectives discussed under chapter four.

5.2 Summary and discussion of Findings

From the findings of the study, the summary and discussion of findings was done according to the objectives of the study.

The influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation

The study revealed a positive but weak relationship between management and leadership strategy and the quality of evaluation. This implies that in a situation where there is effective enforcement of evaluation guidelines in the evaluation process; where management involves all key stakeholders; where activity monitoring is done routinely; and where the FHI360 review board is functional, the quality of evaluation is slightly improved. This finding is in line with Ika et al (2010) who assert that stakeholder support as reflected in their leadership support towards a project management process significantly determines the quality of a project evaluation activity. Diallo and Thuillier (2005) also explain that the ability of the stakeholders to effectively enforce the available rules and regulations in the project evaluation process is important for evaluation success.

This finding is also in line with Rogers and Patricia (2009) who assert that appropriate leadership helps to guide the evaluation staff on key guidelines that are more likely to lead to the attainment of high results. To ensure this, management can spearhead an internal evaluation programme for staff that are leading evaluation efforts in their teams and want to share and deepen their skills and knowledge. This may also work through debriefs of evaluation programme staff by assessing what went well, what did not, key lessons, and actions taken as a result. Synthesize and share relevant lessons with other programme staff so they can benefit from promising practice and lessons learned.

The ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines and standard operating procedures influences the effectiveness, reliability and credibility of the evaluation with regard to good evaluator recruitment procedures, and unbiased selection process. This implies that in a situation where management has the capacity and ability to put in place effective evaluation guidelines

and be able to transparently recruit and put in place a reliable and transparent committee for evaluations then there is more likelihood that the project evaluation process and outcomes are more likely to be credible. This gives the project's outcomes more credibility, and hence be more reliable in informing the implementation of subsequent projects. This finding is in line with Cash and Fox, (2012) who assert that successful project management requires leaders to fully plan according to the guidelines available for evaluation with a commitment to complete the project; ensure careful appointment of a skilled project manager; spend time defining the project adequately; plan correctly the activities in the project; ensure correct and adequate information flows; change activities to accommodate frequent changes on dynamic; accommodate employees' personal goals with performance and rewards; and make a fresh start when mistakes in implementation have been identified.

In a situation where project activities are regularly and effectively monitored, most errors in the project implementation process are likely to be identified and rectified in the process. This allows fulfilment of all the intended objectives of the organization and the achievement of all the project goals. Regular and effective activity monitoring allows full participation of staff in the project, hence the need to understand effectively its details, and ensure that key performance indicators in the monitoring process are emphasized for the achievement of the objectives of the evaluation process.

The influence of staff competence on the quality of project evaluation

Study findings revealed a strong positive significant relationship between staff competence and evaluation quality. As per the study, therefore, if staff involved in the evaluation process are competently trained and experienced; if programme staff are also skilled in M & E; if staff develop comprehensive quality evaluation terms of reference TORs and focus on utilization of

evaluation findings; then there is more likelihood that there will be quality evaluations. This finding is in line with Baker et al (2004) who assert that staff competences in the project evaluation process in the long run determine significantly the evaluation quality of the project management process. Skills matter for evaluators who are in the position of determining what works and what does not, and who have the responsibility to help guide the institutions we work for toward practices that will yield the best results; hence professional competence is a must.

This is also in line with Rogers and Patricia (2009) who assert that the quality of the evaluation is determined by the competence, in terms of training and experience, of the staff involved in the evaluation process. Evaluation is an important tool that an organization can use to demonstrate its accountability; improve its performance; increase its abilities for obtaining funds or future planning; and fulfil the organizational objectives.

The competences of staff members involved in the monitoring process is important in determining the quality of evaluations in the project. The level of experience and training determines the level of competence the staff exhibit during the evaluation process and this largely determines the quality of evaluation since experience is used in streamlining or dealing with any challenges that may come through in the evaluation process, thus determining the quality of evaluation conducted.

This finding is in line with Briceno (2010) who explains that quality evaluation with competent staff results into good information for the organization to make effective decisions. Information derived from project evaluations can be used to serve many purposes. A successful project evaluation may therefore be measured by the utilization of the information got from it.

Staff members with the appropriate skills who are involved in the evaluation process help other staff members to quickly and easily identify the loophole areas in the evaluation process and be able to provide appropriate solutions to ensure that projects are effectively evaluated. This influences the overall quality of project evaluations. This in line with White and Howard (2008) who assert that quality evaluations are a result of skilled programme and relevant operational staff responsible and accountable for designing, commissioning, and managing evaluations, as well as for using their results. Such competence helps to effectively meet standards of quality, relevance and use. They may use a fully distributed model, with programme officers responsible for their own evaluations, or they may designate a team member to lead evaluation efforts.

The influence of resource management on the quality of project evaluation

Findings revealed a weak relationship between resource management and the quality of project evaluation at FHI360. Therefore, in a situation where resources for the evaluation process are available, effectively used and there are effective accountability penalties whose consequences the project implementation team are aware of, then there is little likelihood that quality will be ensured among the project implementation team, hence resulting in good project quality. This finding is related to Speckbacher et al (2003) who explain that the quality of evaluations may be determined by resources available in the organization. The stringent measures for accountability in place may influence the nature of evaluations likely to be carried out. The transparency in financial and operational terms to funders and governments (upward accountability) may be coupled with heavy demands for accountability to beneficiaries and civil society more generally (downward accountability) and this may slow down the process of evaluation.

Therefore, improvement in resource management in the project life cycle would lead to minimal but vital improvement in project evaluation quality.

When the available resources are utilized effectively and appropriately in the right time, then such resources serve the purpose for which it is meant. This allows acquiring of the right human resources and other resources that must be used in the project life cycle so as to pave the way for quality evaluations. In this, Chen (2004) asserts that resource usage in planned time may also influence the quality of evaluation in the long run. The increasingly problematic issue of time requirements for marginalized social groups to be able to participate in M & E of any kind, and hence who can afford to become involved in an M & E process is also not being tackled by the literature, and presumably by the practice that it aims to document.

5.3 Conclusions

Staff competence and capacity has the greatest influence on the quality of project evaluations at FHI360 Uganda. However, all the three factors, that is, management strength, staff competence and resource management are interlinked in influencing the quality of evaluation. For example, management determines resource availability and allocation, which has a bearing on the nature and quality of staff hired in terms of expertise, training and experience, all of which are essential if quality project evaluations are to be realised.

The influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation quality

The enforcement of evaluation guidelines by management has a small but vital influence on evaluation quality in terms of the credibility, accuracy, reliability and effectiveness of the evaluation findings, and this is achieved through adherence to set evaluation standards. Management strength is measured by how effectively it enforces the guidelines, standards and the extent to which these guidelines are followed by partners, evaluators and staff involved in project evaluation processes.

Enforcing these guidelines also involves availing and allocating resources, the quality of staff to be hired and the will to involve all key stakeholders; thus guidelines are linked to resource management and M & E staff competence.

Therefore, if management develops and effectively enforces the implementation of evaluation guidelines and standards, the quality of project evaluation will be fairly improved, and the reverse is true.

The influence of staff competence on the quality of project evaluation quality

The competence of the staff involved in the project evaluation greatly determines the quality of evaluations in that the methodology applied is dependent on expertise and training demonstrated by the ability to formulate quality evaluation terms of reference, designing data instruments, cleanliness of data collected, accuracy of analysis and report writing. There is need to nurture the existing M & E staff to be more competent in managing more rigorous evaluations, given that competent and experienced M & E professionals are expensive and difficult to find, which increases cost and time as key elements of quality in evaluations.

Therefore, if the staff hired are skilled enough and experienced in evaluation activities, they are able to conduct high quality evaluations, plus reducing the cost of evaluation, since there may be no need of hiring many or any external evaluators. Thus staff competence and capacity is very much directly related to resources in relation to evaluation.

It is very important for the M & E staff to understand the programmes/projects being implemented. For example, you cannot develop evaluation terms of reference, or enforce quality control and assurance measures if you are ignorant of the programme or project being implemented. Without this understanding, it is difficult to ensure quality control and assurance.

The influence of resource management on the quality of project evaluation

Resource management dimensions of availability, allocation, flow and usage are vital to the quality of project evaluation conducted. Resources assigned to M & E activities determine the quality of evaluation staff hired relative to accuracy of results, methodological rigour employed (reliability, utility and credibility), timeliness and transparency in the evaluation process. Therefore, if evaluation resources are managed well in an institutional framework, then there will be a slight improvement in the quality of evaluation. Short of this, the quality will be questioned.

5.4 Recommendations

The influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation

Management should focus on internal capacity strengthening of M & E staff, which will result in improved ability to commission, conduct and/or supervise quality project evaluations.

Management should establish and facilitate a country office research and evaluation unit, to ensure that studies and evaluations are of high scientific rigour, especially evaluative research which is particularly important across all projects.

The Management of the FHI360 should develop Uganda-specific project evaluation standards, informed by the Uganda national evaluation standards as well as donor set evaluation standards. This will ensure that all evaluations conducted are in tandem with national and donor standards.

The influence of staff competence on the quality of project evaluation

FHI360 needs to focus on building internal capacity of the existing monitoring and evaluation staff with advanced project evaluation skills, especially in qualitative methodologies. This will reduce the amount of money and time spent on consultants who are often hired to do the evaluations. Skilled and competent local will be faster, cheaper and may potentially collect more reliable information than relying on external data consultants whose focus may not be programme improvement, who have little knowledge of the evaluation and may make biased conclusions.

The influence of resource management on the quality of project evaluation

FHI360 should strengthen the financial flow system to fasten the resource flow so that activities are implemented on schedule and evaluation activities are conducted on time. This will eliminate

the possibility of evaluators and data collectors working hurriedly to beat deadlines, when the activity was initially well planned and budgeted for.

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Appendix I – Data collection instruments

Institutional/organizational factors affecting the quality of project evaluation in NGOs in Uganda. A case study of FHI360 Uganda Office.

Instructions: Select one option for each question, and tick the option selected

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Introduction

Dear sir/Madam, you are being requested to participate in a research study focusing on Institutional factors affecting the quality of monitoring and evaluation in FHI360 Uganda.

This is a self-administered questionnaire.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to examine how institutional factors affect the quality of project monitoring and evaluation in Non-government organisations. The objectives are:

1. To establish the influence of management strength on the quality of project evaluation.
2. To investigate the influence of staff competence on the quality of project evaluation.
3. To examine the influence of resource management on the quality of project evaluation

Study Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: respond to a questionnaire through self-administration or direct interview (which ever suits you best), and you may be asked to provide information through an in-depth interview methodology where you responses will be audio ally recorded using a tape recorder or written or both.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. I will not include any personal information in any report I may publish, that would make it possible to identify you.

Right not to participate or withdraw

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with me. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Category	Initials	Designation	Date	Signature
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<i>Respondent</i>				
<i>Researcher</i>				

Instructions: Select one option for each statement (mark with an **X**) by stating the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

Management strength

1. The ability to put in place and enforce evaluation guidelines and standard operating procedures influences the quality of project evaluation

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

2. The level of project activity monitoring and supervision affects the quality of project evaluation

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

3. The level of involvement and support of all key project stakeholders including beneficiaries in evaluation activities has an effect on the quality of evaluation

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

4. The existence of a functional in-house institutional review board in an organisation has an effect on the quality of project evaluations conducted

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Staff competence and capacity

5. The quality of the evaluation is determined by competence of the staff involved in the evaluation process in terms of the training and experience.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

6. Program operational staff responsible and accountable for managing evaluations have a great influence on the quality of evaluations in NGOs.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

7. Ability to develop evaluation terms of reference has a great effect on the eventual quality of project evaluation.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

8. Having experienced M&E staff results into good evaluative information for the organization which helps it to make effective decisions.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

9. A quality project evaluation is measured by the utilization of the information got from it

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Resource management

10. Resource availability and allocation within institutions influences the quality of project monitoring and evaluations.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

11. Resource usage within the stipulated and planned time influences the quality of evaluation in the long run.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

12. Failure to adjust projects and programmes with early signs of problems affects the quality of project evaluation

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

13. If beneficiary community members are trained in self-monitoring or indicator measurement then the job in terms of time and costs can be distributed.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Evaluation quality

13) Management must not impose restrictions on the scope, content, comments and recommendations of evaluation reports. Evaluators must be free of conflict of interest.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

14) Evaluations must be designed and completed in a timely fashion so as to ensure the usefulness of the findings and recommendations

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

15) To enhance the validity and usefulness of evaluation findings and recommendations, all key stakeholders should be engaged in various ways in the conduct of the evaluation.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

16. To enhance the usefulness of evaluation findings and recommendations, all key stakeholders should be engaged in various ways in the conduct of the evaluation.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

17. Evaluators must have professional integrity, respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

16. Project Evaluation findings should not reflect personal or sectoral interests.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

17. Removing bias and maximizing objectivity are critical for the credibility of the evaluation

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

18. Meaningful consultation with stakeholders is essential for the utility of the evaluation

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

In-depth interview questions:

Management strength

1. How does management strength influence the quality of project evaluation?
2. How does the ability to put in place and enforce evaluation influence the effectiveness of the evaluation?
3. How does the frequency of activity monitoring and supervision affect the quality of evaluation results?
4. How does the existence of an institutional review board affect the quality of evaluation results?

Staff competence and capacity

1. In what ways does level of competence of the staff involved in evaluations affected the quality of evaluations at FHI360?
2. In what ways does experience of staff involved in evaluations affect evaluation quality?
3. How does competence in terms of technology adoption by staff affect the quality of evaluations?
4. How do evaluation terms of reference affect the quality of project evaluation.?
5. In what ways does staff training affect the quality of project/program evaluations?

Resource management

1. How does resource allocation with in FHI360 affect the quality of project evaluations?
2. How does resource availability with in FHI360 affect the quality of project evaluations?
3. How does resource usage of allocated funds influence the quality of evaluation on FHI360?
4. In what ways does resource flow affect the quality of project evaluation?