# Role of Capacity Building in M&E and Performance of Community-Based Projects in the Justice and Mercy Organization in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of capacity building in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the performance of community-based projects in the Justice and Mercy (JAM) Organization in Homa Bay County in Kenya. Monitoring and evaluation are a crucial aspect in monitoring project progress and delivery of successful results, especially when supported with methodical capacity-building establishments. Although more funds is being invested in M&E systems by non-governmental organizations, most community-based projects are still performing poorly low training of staff as well as poor adoption of evaluation programs. The study used a mixed-methods case study design using a quantitative survey, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Stratified random and purposive sampling methods were adopted to select a sample comprising 180 respondents who included the JAM staff and project beneficiaries. The collection of the data relied on the Kobo Collect digital data collection tool. The study performed descriptive and regression analysis through SPSS. The results reveal that beneficiaries were always sensitized to the objectives of the project. The research established that the training sessions were relevant. All staff members observed that capacity building did not play a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of M&E. The regression analysis revealed a slight positive, yet statistically insignificant, impact of capacity building on project performance (p = 0.397). These findings indicate that while capacity building may be conceptually valuable, its measurable effect was not supported by statistical evidence in this study. Therefore, capacity building is an area for strategic improvement rather than a proven determinant. Based on the findings, this study concludes that capacity building is a necessary yet poorly optimized aspect in project M&E practices. It recommends uniform training updates conducted at regular intervals as per organizational requirements. It also recommends that further studies need to be conducted regarding the sustainable effects of capacity building on the projects and the community in general.

**Keywords**: Capacity Building, Community-Based Projects, Project Performance, Staff Training, Evaluation Frameworks

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices support in improving project performance, particularly in the context of capacity building. According to Kissi et al. (2019), M&E is an important tool for implementing performance within project frameworks. Successful M&E integrates strategic documents into the work plans, employs both domestic and foreign expertise, and leverages several sources of data to conduct evaluation. Based on Waylen et al. (2019), effective global projects usually base their success on stringent project monitoring processes. The capacity building has well-organized M&E systems as a significant pillar of the sustainability development goals (SDGs) because SDGs require M&E systems with management support, stakeholder mobilization, qualified personnel, specialized training, and effective reporting tools.

According to Adugna (2021), capacity building empowers institutions by improving skills, systems, and structures involved in strategic planning and regular monitoring. Karimi et al. (2021) attribute project failures to ineffective management, ill relations with stakeholders, and overrun budget gaps that can be overcome with the help of the quality of knowledge and M&E systems enhancement. Manumbu (2020) states that the budget and stakeholder theories of project management guide M&E in enablement of project managers to distribute resources efficiently and react to project challenges upstream.

Many institutions conduct M&E activities that promote project performance. M&E achievements in the sectors of learning and adaptation: education, food security, health, and psychosocial support are the parts and parcel of capacity building. Kabeyi (2019) characterizes M&E as a tracking system that offers implementable solutions and helps to optimize strategies and stay in line with project objectives. Kibukho (2021) continues to argue that the dedication of the management to M&E can improve the institutional performance, especially with the introduction of gender-sensitive practices.

### Statement of the Problem

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities are well known as the necessary parts in the determination of the success of the developmental projects. The successful M&E strategies, which include capacity building, proper training, and reporting, have been associated with the attainment of sustainable development goals and institutional development. Besides all these virtues, an issue exists when it comes to the implementation of M&E systems among the community-based organizations.

The top management usually supports the idea of M&E systems, but due to several complications, the creation and implementation of the systems are complicated, such as the lack of stakeholder engagement, technological inability, flawed/crap logical design framework, and strict timing program. These matters are worsened by the availability of resources and the complication of organizations such as the Justice and Mercy Organization (JAM) in Homa Bay County. Despite numerous investments used to popularize M&E practices by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a considerable number of projects conducted at the community level continue to be poorly developed. These raise concerns about the effectiveness of this investment.

There is a clear disconnect between the resources allocated for M&E and the actual performance outcomes of NGO-supported initiatives. In particular, the insufficient capacity building in M&E could be one of the factors that are causing the continued problems of community-based projects. This gap underscores the need to evaluate the role that capacity building in M&E plays in enhancing the performance of such projects. Therefore, this study seeks to assess how capacity building in monitoring and evaluation influences the effectiveness of community-based initiatives implemented by the Justice and Mercy Organization in Homa Bay County.

## Purpose of the study

The study aims to assess the role of capacity building in M&E on the performance of community-based projects in the Justice and Mercy Organization.

## Significance of the Study

Findings from the Justice and Mercy Organization's performance would help those involved in M&E practices, such as project managers and heads of units, review and improve their methods for providing development assistance and revise the current strategies and policies. It can serve as a manual for development professionals and donors on how to plan and carry out sustainable development projects and choose which project areas should be prioritized to accomplish the necessary expansion and improvement in the Justice and Mercy Organization.

The study provides information that helps researchers understand how different M&E methods impact project performance. With their smart planning, donor-funded programs benefit from the study. The study collected data on ongoing project monitoring and evaluation, analyzed it, and established the best M&E practices for improved project performance. Study findings and suggestions are useful in improving project management effectiveness and efficiency so that the intended goals can be met.

The study's conclusions would be very helpful to the Justice and Mercy Organization as it assessed the effectiveness of its M&E practices for project management to enhance project performance and stakeholder accountability for resource utilization.

## Scope of the Study

This study focused on evaluating the role of capacity building in M&E on the performance of community-based projects implemented by the Justice and Mercy (JAM) Organization in Homa Bay County, Kenya. It examined how staff training and structured M&E systems influence project outcomes such as timeliness and community acceptance. The study was limited to JAM's active projects within the county and targeted both staff members and beneficiaries. It did not extend to other NGOs, focusing instead on internal processes, practices, and capacity development within the selected organization.

## Limitations

The study was limited to one organization in Homa Bay County, affecting generalizability. Time and resource constraints, possible response bias, and variability in training experiences also posed challenges.

**Delimitation of the Study**
**Capacity Building:** It is the enhancement of a person's or a group's capacity "to generate, perform, or deploy.
**Stakeholder Involvement**: Is the procedure by which a company involves pertinent parties to attain predetermined results.

## I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**Capacity Building Theory**
Capacity building necessitates the enhancement of knowledge, skills, commitment, frameworks, protocols, and leadership to enable successful health promotion. The UNDP was a pioneer in the creation of international capacity-building and development operations. Bamberg, Murphy, and Robinson specifically mentioned the idea in question and gave a reliable source to back it up. According to Franco, Tracey, & Franco (2019), capacity building helps nonprofits and their leaders learn the skills needed to function better and succeed in the end. It helps to increase the likelihood that philanthropic groups improve lives and provide solutions to society's most difficult challenges. By encouraging effective management, solid governance, and steadfast rededication to achieve results, capacity building increases an organization's ability to carry out its goals.

Capacity building aims to improve infrastructure and practices by developing new methods, processes, or ideals that support and strengthen practitioners and their organizations to solve local health concerns. Based on a philosophy of change, capacity development explains how it can result in long-term effects as well as overall impact. More significantly, it gives a reason and vision for planning, which informs the design, execution, and evaluation of capacity-building initiatives. This theory is relevant to the topic at hand because it emphasizes the need for capacity building in the successful implementation of community-based programs.
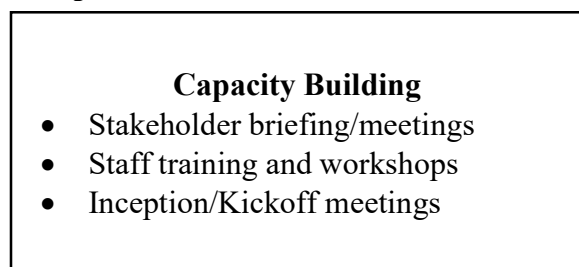
**Empirical Literature**
A resonant method of thinking about objective achievement should come from project monitoring and evaluation. Ramsbottom *et al.* (2018) pointed out the need for local capacity building and community involvement during a program. Determining the community's needs, deciding on the program's goals, carrying out the activities, and overseeing and assessing the program all require active community participation. Project management requires excellent human resource management. They are especially necessary for efficient monitoring and assessment. World Health Organization (2019) further demonstrates that this should not be only training but also implementing a learning strategy. For justice and mercy development, community-based organizations, fewer M&E practices are known calling for the need for the current study.

In a study published in 2010, Rogito utilized the Youth Enterprise Development Fund in Kenya's Marani District as an example to assess how M&E affected project effectiveness. Understanding how M&E training for implementers affects the execution of youth programs was one of the study's goals. Few young venture implementers, according to the investigation, had not received M&E training beyond basic seminars. The projects' sustainability suffered as a result. The nationwide scope of the Kazi Kwa Vijana initiative required capacity building to become a major project component, as outlined through Mibey's (2011) research on factors shaping the implementation of evaluation and monitoring programs in Kenya (Kenya). These findings stressed the need to raise
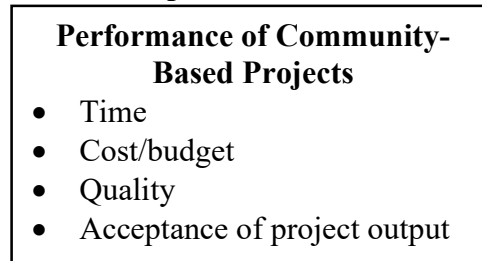
both training and human resources management interest levels across the project area.
**Conceptual Framework.**
**Independent Variables**                                                    **Dependent Variables**

| Capacity Building | Performance of Community-Based Projects |
|---|---|
| • Stakeholder briefing/meetings<br>• Staff training and workshops<br>• Inception/Kickoff meetings | • Time<br>• Cost/budget<br>• Quality<br>• Acceptance of project output |

**Community Perception**
**Government Policy**

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology
### Target Population
The target population for this study included all individuals directly involved with or benefiting from the Justice and Mercy (JAM) Organization's community-based projects in Homa Bay County. This comprised 328 individuals: 28 staff members, including project managers, heads of departments, and M&E personnel, and 300 stakeholders representing the project beneficiaries. These beneficiaries were members of organized community groups actively participating in various development activities such as health, education, economic empowerment, and food security. Targeting this broad population ensured the study captured diverse perspectives across operational and beneficiary levels for accurate assessment.

### Sampling Procedures and Techniques
The study employed a combination of **purposive** and **stratified random sampling** techniques to enhance the representativeness and reliability of the data. All 28 staff members were selected through purposive sampling due to their specific roles and knowledge of the organization's monitoring and evaluation activities. For the 300 project beneficiaries, stratified random sampling was used. Beneficiaries were grouped into strata based on their community affiliations, and proportionate sampling was applied to each group. Yamane's (1967) formula was used to derive a final, statistically valid sample size of 180 respondents.

### Sample Population
The final sample population consisted of 180 respondents drawn from both JAM staff and project beneficiaries. It included two project managers, three heads of departments, one M&E officer, and 174 community beneficiaries selected from organized local groups. This carefully balanced sample provided both technical and community-level insights into the organization's monitoring and evaluation practices. Staff offered perspectives on M&E implementation and planning, while beneficiaries provided feedback on project outcomes and participation. The composition ensured comprehensive, multi-level analysis, aligning with the study's objective to assess capacity building's role in improving project performance.

## Research Instruments

To gather quantitative and qualitative data, the study employed two primary research tools as questionnaires and interview guides. The survey to be presented to the beneficiaries and general staff included closed and open questions and was conducted in electronic form using the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform. It addressed important M&E aspects such as stakeholder engagement, budgeting, planning, and capacity development. The attitudes were quantified with a Likert scale (1 to 5, where 1 was to be labelled as Strongly Agree, and 5 as Strongly Disagree). In the case of qualitative data, key informant interview guides were created and subsequently conducted on the target staff members, M&E, and management personnel.

The instruments were designed based on the objectives of the study and were capable of exploring M&E practices in-depth, which included the capacity-building initiatives. Reliability and validity of both tools were pre-tested so that they would be of high quality. People who were not included in the sample carried out the changes about pilot findings. The multi-instrument design enabled the researchers to record high-quality data that will be useful in the determination of the influence of M&E capacity building on the community projects.

## Data Collection Methods and Procedures

In this research, the use of digital surveys and qualitative interactions in data collection was used together to provide comprehensive findings. To collect the quantitative data, a series of electronic questionnaires using the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform was used, which supports the Android operating system and allows conducting work both online and offline, providing speed and convenience in the field. These questionnaires were among 174 beneficiaries, and they had areas of stakeholders in M&E systems involvement, budgeting, capacity building, and planning.

In the case of qualitative data, six participants of the JAM staff out of the total participants were involved in key informant interviews under a structured guide format, whereas two focus group discussions (FGD) were done with the beneficiaries. There were eight people in each FGD, and their discussion was guided by standard discussion rules to stimulate frank discussion and provide insightful responses. Secondary data (such as the documents of the project and performance reports) was also checked using a checklist. The convergence of data sources and methods of collection made it possible to triangulate, which increased the validity and height of the findings. Ethical aspects of data collection, which include informed consent, confidentiality, were highly followed to promote the integrity and credibility of the data collection process.

## Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

The data gathered was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative data were coded and fed into SPSS to be processed. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were applied as descriptive statistics to summarize the data. Regression analysis was used in tracing the relationships among variables, where a model touching on the effects of M&E design, capacity building, budgeting, and involvement of the stakeholders towards project performance were traced.

The regression equation used was:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon,$$

Where Y = project performance, and the Xs represent independent variables. The significance of relationships was tested using p-values, with a threshold of ≤0.05 for statistical significance. Additionally, a one-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to control for unwanted variables and determine the net effect of capacity-building factors. Interview and FGD qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically. Results were reported in the form of tables, charts, and graphs to support the interpretation and make results clear to stakeholders and decision-makers.III. FINDINGS

**Role of Capacity Building in M&E Practices**

The research aimed at identifying the effect of capacity building in M&E on the performance of community-based projects in the Justice and Mercy organization. Respondents were asked about the role of capacity building in project performance at Justice and Mercy Organization, and the findings are presented in Table 4.6 below.

**Beneficiaries Findings**

This section presents beneficiaries' responses on role of capacity building in M&E practices on the performance of community-based projects at the Justice and Mercy Organization.

**Table 1: Role of Capacity Building in M&E Practices**

| Statement | Yes | No | Not Sure | Mean | Std. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| During the enrollment, were you sensitized to the nature and benefts of the Justice and Mercy Organizations? | 146(97.3%) | 1(0.7%) | 3(2.0%) | 1.05 | .292 |
| Were the training topics relevant to you? | 149(99.3%) | 0(0.0%) | 1(0.7%) | 1.01 | .163 |
| Does Justice and Mercy offer frequent training in the course of the project implementation? | 136(90.7%) | 6(4.0%) | 8(5.3%) | 1.15 | .483 |

The analysis of Table 1 highlights the perspectives of beneficiaries on capacity building in M&E practices for the Justice and Mercy Organizations. A significant majority, 97.3%, of beneficiaries agreed that they were sensitized about the nature and benefits of the projects during enrollment, with only 0.7% disagreeing and 2.0% unsure. The mean score of 1.05 and the standard deviation of 0.292 depict a high consensus of respondents, highlighting the impact of the initial capacity-building initiatives. This implies that beneficiaries were well informed as far as the objectives and value of the project were concerned, and in all probability, the degree of alignment with project goals and participation was high.

The FGD findings concurred with this finding since participants attributed their awareness of these projects to training sessions and information disseminated through contact with farmers and Community Health Volunteers (CHVs). One respondent said,

> *"I was made aware of these projects through training sessions and information disseminated through contact farmers and Community Health Volunteers (CHVs)."*

The findings match those of a study by Rogito (2010) stressed the need to provide M&E training to implementers within the context of youth projects in Kenya. The survey findings indicated that full accomplished M&E training access was compromised by project sustainability, which pointed

to the need to roll out sound capacity-building programs. In making beneficiaries aware of the benefits of the project, the Justice and Mercy Organizations will be able to create a more effective and interested participant base, which eventually will increase the results of the project.

Furthermore, the relevance of training topics was also strongly confirmed by the beneficiaries, with 99.3% agreeing and 0.7% being uncertain. The extremely low mean point (1.01) and standard deviation (0.163) indicate an almost unanimous attitude to the relevance issue of training materials. This goes to show that the training was highly useful to the needs of beneficiaries, which instilled their interest and efficiency in carrying out project activities. This kind of relevant and specific training content is critical in enabling the beneficiaries to be active players and contributors to the success of the projects. This is in concurrence with the findings of Mibey (2011), which promoted enhanced interest in training and human resource management as the key variable supporting success during M&E implementation.

On the frequency of training when the project was in implementation, 90.7 percent of the beneficiaries agreed to a statement that training was often done and 4.0 percent did not agree, and 5.3 percent indicated that they were not sure. By overall mean of 1.15 and standard deviation greater than adequate 0.483, there exists a high level of agreement, although it also means that there may be some differences in perceptions. This inconsistency indicates that there is a potential that a minor group of the beneficiaries did not receive a homogeneous level of training. Although the general opinion towards the regular training is good, there can be occasional lapses that should be responded to, guaranteeing regular capacity building amongst all the beneficiaries. This issue is reflective of Rogito (2010), which indicates a constant need to train and build capacity to keep projects going and to retain their success.

**Staff Findings**
This section presents staff responses on the role of capacity building in M&E practices on the performance of community-based projects at the Justice and Mercy Organization.

**Table 2: Role of Capacity Building in M&E**

| Statement | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Mean | Std. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The induction of local M&E expertise can be facilitated by training M&E workers. | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 9(100.0%) | 3.0 | .000 |
| Training for M&E workers may improve their technical proficiency and the quality of the M&E human resources. | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 9(100.0%) | 3.0 | .000 |
| The training's topics should always be pertinent to the M&E's overall effectiveness. | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 9(100.0%) | 3.0 | .000 |
| The M&E team benefits from training because it helps them comprehend how a project's M&E system works. | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 9(100.0%) | 3.0 | .000 |
| The M&E teams at Justice and Mercy receive frequent training to stay current with changes in project work | 1(11.1%) | 1(11.1%) | 7(77.8%) | 2.67 | .707 |
| Building personnel capacity can inspire | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 9(100.0%) | 3.0 | .000 |

project teams to deliver excellent results.

Table 2 findings highlight strong staff consensus on the role of capacity building in enhancing M&E practices for the Justice and Mercy Organizations. Staff at all levels stated that training greatly supports learning about local M&E practices and enhances the skills and professional abilities of staff involved in M&E. The fact that the mean score is exactly 3.0 and the standard deviation is at the lowest possible, 0.000, demonstrates that everyone agrees on the key role training plays in helping local workers and boosting the M&E workforce. This shows that what Rogito (2010) wrote about M&E is correct: Better M&E training ensures that projects can continue in situations where local capacity matters a lot.

Similarly, the unanimous agreement (mean = 3.0, standard deviation = 0.000) that training topics should be pertinent to the overall effectiveness of M&E practices highlights the importance of aligning training content with the specific needs of the M&E systems. Tailoring training to address relevant issues equips staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance project monitoring and evaluation processes effectively. This is consistent with Mibey's (2011) recommendation for increased focus on training and human resource management as integral components of successful M&E execution.

Furthermore, staff unanimously agreed that training helps them understand how the M&E system works, which is crucial for effective implementation. The perfect mean and zero variability suggest that staff highly value training for building their understanding of project systems. This comprehension is essential for ensuring that M&E practices are effectively implemented and that staff can contribute meaningfully to achieving project objectives.

When assessing the frequency of training, 77.8% of staff agreed that training is regularly provided, while 11.1% were neutral, and another 11.1% disagreed. The mean score of 2.67 and standard deviation of 0.707 indicate moderate agreement but also reveal some variability in perceptions. This suggests that while training is generally perceived as frequent, there may be inconsistencies in its delivery. Addressing these gaps could enhance staff perceptions and ensure uniform access to training opportunities, which is critical for maintaining high standards in M&E practices.

Finally, the unanimous agreement among staff (100%) that capacity building inspires project teams to deliver excellent results, with a perfect mean of 3.0 and no variability, emphasizes the motivational impact of training on team performance. This finding indicates that capacity-building initiatives foster a culture of excellence and commitment to achieving project goals, reinforcing the notion that well-structured training programs are essential for project success.**Statistical Tests Correlation Analysis**
Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the linear relationships among the key study variables. The results indicated a weak positive relationship between capacity building and project performance (r = 0.163), which was not statistically significant. Other variables such as stakeholder involvement and design and planning had moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlations with project performance.

**Table 3: Capacity Building Correlation Between Independent Variables and Project Performance (PP).**

| Project Performance (PP) | Pearson Correlation (r) | Direction | Strength of Relationship | Significance (p-value) | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Capacity Building (CB)** | 0.163** | Positive | Weak | 0.397 | Contributes to project performance, though in a weak way |

**Regression Analysis**

Table 4 provides a report on regression analyses investigating the impact of capacity building on project performance in the Justice and Mercy Organization. A multiple linear regression model was run in the SPSS software to evaluate the association between project performance and capacity building. The analysis was conducted to establish whether capacity building had a significant impact on the outcomes of the projects. The interpretation of results was based on the coefficients and p-values; the significance of predictors was determined by a criterion: $p < 0.05$.

**Hypothesis Testing**

The study also aimed to test the hypothesis of the study.

$H0_2$: Capacity building does not have a significant impact on the performance of community-based projects in the Justice and Mercy Organization.

**Table 4: Regression Model Coefficients**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 (Constant) | .216 | .221 | | .978 | .330 | -.221 | .654 |
| Capacity Building | .163 | .192 | .067 | .849 | .397 | -.217 | .544 |

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Community-Based Projects

Regression analysis was used to investigate the impact of independent variables, Capacity Building, on the Performance of Community-Based Projects in the Justice and Mercy Organization. The intercept (B =0.216, p =0.330) is the performance of the projects when all predictors are zero.

**Regression Equation:**

$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$

Where:

$Y$ = Project Performance

$X_1$ = Capacity Building

$\alpha$ = Constant (intercept)

$\beta_1$ = Coefficients of predictor

**ε** = Error term

**PP = 0.216 + 0.163(CB)**

Although capacity building is positively correlated with performance (B=0.163), the strength of the relationship is not found to be statistically significant (p=0.397). This shows that there is not enough evidence to conclude that capacity building has a significant effect on the Performance of Community-Based Projects in Justice and Mercy Organizations. Notwithstanding that, the variable may remain relevant under specific conditions or in conjunction with other variables.IV.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion
The study identified key issues affecting Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in community-level projects at the Justice and Mercy Organization. Although the descriptive data shows the perceived positive impact of capacity building on engagement and awareness, the regression analysis has shown that there is no statistically significant relationship between capacity building and project performance. Therefore, capacity building must be considered as a supportive, but not conclusive having influence on improving M&E outcomes. Sensitization, relevant training, and continuous support equip participants to align with project goals and sustain outcomes. Its practical impact fosters community ownership, ensuring more effective monitoring, evaluation, and long-term success of community-based projects.

### Recommendations
Justice and Mercy Organization should enhance capacity-building programs by standardizing and aligning training content with specific M&E needs to ensure consistent and impactful skill development across the organization.

### Recommendation for Future Research
This section proposes future research on the long-term impact of capacity building in M&E, emphasizing standardized training's role in enhancing skills, organizational effectiveness, and sustained project success.
The study suggests an area for future research to be on the assessment of the sustained effect of improved capacity-building activities on M&E methods and program/project performance.

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