Project monitoring and evaluation to engage stakeholders of international development projects for community impact

Abstract

Purpose: This paper aims to examine the role of project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in international development (ID) project stakeholders’ relationships. This study draws on agency theory to examine the specific role M&E plays in improving ID project impact.

Design/methodology/approach—Qualitative data comprising of in-depth interviews were collected from ID project stakeholders such as project donors, implementing partners, and steering committee members.

Findings—Results of the study show that project M&E activities can serve multiple purposes including the collection of data for the assessment of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. This information is shared with stakeholders to assist in evidence-based decision making to improve project impact on community. This study shows that M&E activities strengthen the relationship between stakeholders by involving multiple stakeholders at different stages of ID projects to identify community needs and to demonstrate the positive community impact. Agency issues such as goal incongruence, information asymmetry, and risk-sharing affect the relationship between the stakeholders. Investing in different M&E activities can reduce these issues, ultimately leading to a positive impact at the community level.

Originality—There has been limited research that explores the principal-agent relationship between project stakeholders of ID projects through the lens of agency theory. The role of M&E to collect project data and address agency issues between project stakeholders to improve project impact is the novel contribution of this paper.
1 Introduction

Project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aims to assess and track the project performance on project activities, output, outcome, and impact (Odhiambo et al., 2020). Project M&E includes multiple activities to collect and disseminate project progress information with relevant project stakeholders to ensure accountability in International Development (ID) projects (Crawford and Bryce, 2003; Odhiambo et al., 2020). ID projects play a key role in the provision of international aid to improve the living conditions of marginalised communities in developing countries (Golini et al., 2014). The goal of ID projects is to positively impact the community/beneficiary level (Golini et al., 2015). Research shows that ID projects’ performance is usually unsatisfactory for reasons such as ineffective stakeholder support (Parker et al., 2018; Miković et al., 2020), inadequate monitoring and evaluation (Ika and Donnelly, 2017), conflicts among stakeholders (Sudhakar, 2015), lack of project supervision, and neglect of long term impact on society (Ika, 2012). The supervision of the ID projects is carried out by project M&E and effective monitoring is the key aspect of ID projects (Ika et al., 2012). The improvement in project supervision is the initial step to improve the project impact in ID projects (Ika, 2015). The role of monitoring to improve project success has received some attention in information systems and construction projects (Mahaney and Lederer, 2003, 2010, 2011). The literature, however, has not yet examined the role M&E plays in engaging stakeholders (Shevchenko et al., 2020) and how this improved stakeholder engagement affects ID project impact (Ika, 2015). This literature gap is addressed in the paper by conceptualising M&E as a supervisory mechanism of ID projects, using agency theory that can explain the variable performance of ID projects.

The literature seems to be suggesting two distinct but related streams of research on ID projects. The first research stream explores how to better engage the ID project stakeholders with diverse backgrounds (Kananura et al., 2017). The second stream looks at how the diverse backgrounds of ID project stakeholders affect their perspectives on ID project performance (Matos et al., 2019). These emerging research streams respond to the calls from practice because many donor-funded ID projects do not achieve the desired impact (Ika et al., 2012). In this paper, we contribute to this discourse by positing that the stakeholders’ perspective on ID project impact can be shaped through more accountable and sophisticated M&E of ID projects.
This study is motivated by the agency theory to examine the agency issues between ID project stakeholders and to determine how these agency issues affect the ID project impact. Agency theory states that in a cooperative relationship, one party is the principal and the other is an agent (Bergen et al., 1992), where the agent is expected to make decisions on behalf of the principal (Jensen, 2003) and to perform in the interest of the principal (Eisenhardt, 1989). Agency theory is an appropriate theoretical lens for this study because it has been used to explain the issues that affect the variable performance of projects in general (Mahaney and Lederer, 2011; Ahola et al., 2021). The use of agency theory to explain ID projects relationships, however, has been limited (Parker et al., 2018). Fayazi et al. (2012) mentioned that the management of goal incongruence, information asymmetry, and risk aversion (key constructs of agency theory) can improve outcomes through collaboration between stakeholders. In addition, agency issues can be overcome by investing in information management and monitoring of agent activities (Parker et al., 2018). This has provided the theoretical support for the conceptualisation of M&E activities as the “principal supervisory mechanism” for ID stakeholders that affects ID project impact. Specifically, we draw on agency theory to answer the following research question (RQ):

**RQ: What role does M&E play in improving ID projects impact?**

To answer this research question, the inductive thematic analysis approach was employed. We use section 2 to provide further details of the unique context of ID projects. The Scopus database was used to examine the extant literature on M&E through the theoretical lens of agency theory which leads to four research propositions. Section 3 provides details of the qualitative research design. Section 4 provides study results, and a discussion on theoretical and practice implications is presented in Section 5. This study concludes in Section 6 with an acknowledgement of study limitations and directions for future research.

2 Literature review

2.1 International development (ID) projects and implementing partners (IPs)

ID projects aim to address the development challenges faced by developing countries. ID projects are carried out by implementing partner(s) (IPs) and financed by multilateral and bilateral donor agencies focused on development issues (Bayiley and Teklu, 2016; Crawford and Bryce, 2003). IPs are generally Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that are frequently
engaged in the execution of ID projects in developing countries. Werker and Ahmed defined NGOs as, “group of players who are active in the efforts of international development and increasing the welfare of poor people in poor countries. NGOs work both independently and alongside bilateral aid agencies from developed countries, private-sector infrastructure operators, self-help associations, and local governments " (2008, p.74).

ID projects are considered an essential pillar for the provision of assistance to marginalised communities (Golini et al., 2015) however, the objectives of ID projects are usually intangible and the impact on the targeted community is difficult to measure (Khang and Moe, 2008). The difficulties in measuring ID project impact have led most projects tasked with humanitarian and social impact to rarely show the required impact on the community (Ika et al., 2012; Ika, 2015). ID projects are different compared to other projects in terms of the management structure, nature, and tangibility of project goals (Ika et al., 2020). ID projects tend to yield enduring social outcomes at the community level (Golini et al., 2014). However, the tangible benefits and deliverables of ID projects are not readily apparent in society (Parker et al., 2018). ID projects are unique in terms of management and impact assessment (Youker, 2003), yet challenging due to unpredictable and risky environments (Khang and Moe, 2008) and resistant to adopting project management tools (Crawford and Bryce, 2003). Careful consideration of these unique characteristics to investigate the agency issues of ID projects is likely to contribute to both theory and practice on how to improve the social impact of ID projects.

### 2.2 Agency theory perspective of ID projects

Agency theory (also called Principal-Agent theory) examines the relationship between a principal and an agent and the ensuing problems when one party (the principal) delegates authority to another party (the agent(s)) to perform work on their behalf (Eisenhardt, 1989). Agency theory has been used by a wide range of scholars in diverse areas such as economics (Spence and Zeckhauser, 1978), accounting (Demski and Feltham, 1978), information systems (Mahaney and Lederer, 2010), marketing (Basu et al., 1985) and political science (Mitnick, 1992). Agency theory is considered empirically valid in diverse areas, but received limited attention in project management and particularly in ID projects (Parker et al., 2018). This theory offers insights for individuals (self-interest, risk aversion), organisations (goal conflict), and information (information asymmetry) that may emerge in the principal-agent relationship (Eisenhardt, 1989). Agency theory postulates that issues related to this principal-agent
arrangement can be minimised by monitoring and strengthening the information exchange (Eisenhardt, 1989). In project management, this information is managed by project M&E activities. Project monitoring is a feedback system and is used to inform the principal about the agent’s activities (Mahaney and Lederer, 2011) and project evaluation takes a broader perspective by measuring the project effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, value for money, and impact on beneficiaries/community (Bayiley and Teklu, 2016). When applied to ID projects, agency theory views the sponsor or donor as the principal who hires the IP(s) as agent(s) to manage the project on their behalf (Parker et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2010). All projects establish a contractual and temporary relationship between parties and thus exhibit an agency nature (Turner et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2018). The application of agency theory to ID projects is appropriate due to the presence of a complex web of stakeholders, the knowledge gap between the stakeholders, and a lack of clear correlation between the real needs of communities and the benefits being offered (Parker et al., 2018). Due to these unique characteristics, the probability of encountering agency problems in ID projects are likely high (Bredin and Söderlund, 2011). Therefore, this study provides theoretical support to conceptualise M&E activities as the supervisory mechanism to improve ID project impact.

2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Commonalities and Differences

M&E in ID projects is based on monitoring and control in the general project management literature (Stem et al., 2005) but the term “evaluation” reflects the intended broader societal impact of ID projects. M&E takes a broader perspective compared to monitoring and control to measure the project effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, value for money and impact (Bayiley and Teklu, 2016). Project M&E is an important phase in the project life cycle, and it assumes even greater importance in the context of ID projects. The focus of M&E activities for ID projects goes beyond the tracking of project progress and outcomes, to assess the impact of project interventions at the community level during and after the project completion (Odhiambo et al., 2020). Menon et al. (2009) define ID project monitoring as "the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives" whereas project evaluation is referred to as "a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision making" (Menon et al., 2009, p.8). Project evaluation provides a learning and improvement opportunity for the
project manager, owner and other key stakeholders through formal and informal channels (Volden and Welde, 2022). The information from project monitoring and reporting is subsequently used for project evaluation (Odhiambo et al., 2020). This shows that “monitoring” and “evaluation” for ID projects are two different activities with unique objectives, yet they are complementary and interlinked with one another (Crawford and Bryce, 2003). “Monitoring” and “evaluation” are often used collectively in ID projects and are interlinked in terms of using the monitoring data for project evaluation (Howes, 1992). However, they are separate activities because the beneficiaries of these activities are different (Maddock, 1993).

The contemporary M&E function is based on the "theory of change". The theory of change is the logical illustration of how an intervention can lead to desired results and shows the logical path to achieve the results (Imas and Rist, 2009). The theory of change is "a blueprint for achieving large-scale, long-term goals " (DuBow and Litzler, 2019, p. 233). The theory of change or the logical model components for M&E includes inputs, activities, output, outcome, and impact, and M&E activities are focused on these components (Morra Imas and Rist, 2009). Crawford and Bryce (2003) developed a conceptual model to integrate the functions of M&E to identify the type of data, the purpose of M&E, and to delineate the intended recipient (stakeholder) of the collected data. Figure 1 has been inspired by the work of Crawford and Bryce (2003), and it has been adapted to provide a graphical representation of project M&E activities carried out during the ID project life cycle. Furthermore, it depicts the relationship of M&E activities to the project logic model. M&E activities conducted at the various stages of a project life cycle aim to track the indicators of inputs, activities, outcomes, output, and impact. Figure 1 shows the common monitoring activities carried out during the project life cycle such as process monitoring and outcome monitoring (Gilliam et al., 2003;Morra Imas and Rist, 2009). Activity/process monitoring aims to monitor the implementation of project intervention and ensures that implementation is on track (Gilliam et al., 2003;Odhiambo et al., 2020). Outcome monitoring is conducted at the outcome level, immediately after completing the project activities. It aims to measure the effectiveness of project activities in achieving the desired results including the outcome and impact of the project (Gilliam et al., 2003). Similarly, project evaluation activities are conducted simultaneously at different stages of projects such as formative evaluation, process evaluation, output evaluation, outcome evaluation, and impact evaluation (Binnendijk, 1989;Morra Imas and Rist, 2009). Formative evaluation and process
evaluation are interlinked and there is a subtle difference between them. Both are conducted during project implementation but the formative evaluation aims to review the existing situation through a baseline data collection process to identify the specific needs of a community. It focuses on the operations of the project and it looks at the way the project, activity or programme is implemented (Morra Imas and Rist, 2009). Process evaluation sheds light on the project activities by giving detailed information related to an ongoing program. For example, process evaluation examines whether the relevant participants are hired for an activity or not. On the other hand, output evaluation is carried out immediately after completing the project, and it intends to measure the project outputs or immediate outcomes. The outcome evaluation is a more intense study conducted after the completion of a project to measure the medium impact of the project. The ultimate impact of a project is measured through impact/ex-post evaluation at the impact level which tends to assess the results of project intervention beyond the output and outcome (long term impact on community) (Gilliam et al., 2003). The systematic and transparent impact evaluation tends to paint a clearer picture of project success (Volden and Welde, 2022).

![Integrated M&E system based on Crawford and Bryce, 2003](image)

ID projects comprise of four key stakeholders such as the donor (providing the funding), IPs(NGOs), the government and community/beneficiaries (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004b) as shown in Figure 2. M&E activities are practised by all IPs, whether the project is implemented through a government or a private organisation. The M&E activities are carried out internally
by the IP internal team and externally by independent parties (Steele et al., 2017). The internal M&E activities are carried out by the internal project management team of the IP, while external M&E is conducted by a third party or independent entity on behalf of the project donor (Morra Imas and Rist, 2009). Figure 2 illustrates the ID project eco-system associated with the project M&E activities and project stakeholders. Internal monitoring aims to monitor the day-to-day activities against a target plan to track results. It is designed and developed to ensure inputs are converted to outputs on time and according to the plan, and to take remedial actions if the project activities are not on track (Howes, 1992). In contrast, external evaluation is conducted by an external independent authority appointed by the donor or by a project management team. This authority draws findings based on monitoring data but investigates beyond the project to measure project impact and effect on the community (Howes, 1992).

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**Figure 2:** ID projects ecosystem, adapted from (Ahsan and Gunawan, 2010)
Together, both monitoring and evaluation activities serve as a tool for managing feedback in ID projects (Görgens and Kusek, 2010). This evidence-based information/feedback can be a useful source for decision-makers and governance at the strategic level. However, to be effective, the output from the M&E process must have systematic mechanisms to incorporate the lessons learned from M&E (Fardoust et al., 2018). M&E is a critical source of information and a primary requirement of donor agencies to meet the reporting and information requirements of multiple stakeholders (Crawford and Bryce, 2003). M&E is a major management function to meet the objectives of a project and stakeholders' expectations in ID projects. Hence, M&E is the tool that is equivalent to monitoring in agency theory as identified by Eisenhardt (1989) to address the issues in a principal agent relationship. M&E in ID projects is a key tool to manage information asymmetry and to improve project performance. Considering these perspectives through the agency theory lens has allowed us to propose the following:

**Proposition 1:** Regular M&E activities in ID projects generate and share information with stakeholders.

### 2.4 Stakeholders’ role in project success and project impact

Project success criteria are the set of factors used to evaluate projects (Cooke-Davies, 2002). The ID project success criteria typically extend beyond the traditional triple constraints (time, scope and cost) (Yalegama et al., 2016). Conventional success criteria for ID projects include relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact on the community, and sustainability (Ika et al., 2012). Project impact on beneficiaries is the most important success dimension of ID projects that aims to show a positive impact on the community (Ika et al., 2010). Meeting the community needs is more important than meeting the triple constraints for the success of community-based projects (Morris, 2013). The project beneficiaries/community are the key recipients of ID projects (see Figure 2), and the community view is important in community-based projects. The impact on the community level is an important factor of project success in ID projects (Yalegama et al., 2016) and it is essential when considering the "project impact" evaluation criterion (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004b). The long-term impact on the community/beneficiaries depends on how the project was managed during the project execution (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004b). M&E plays a pivotal role in contributing to overall project success and improving project impact (Kissi et al., 2019). M&E activities can track the
immediate and long-term impact and can provide credible answers to why project intervention was taken and to what extent it will contribute to project goals (Görgens and Kusek, 2010). Given this context, a focus will be placed on the ID project's impact as a measure of project success for this study.

Project stakeholders play an important role in meeting the success criteria and to demonstrate the intended project impact. ID projects consist of a complex web of stakeholders (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004a; Youker, 2003). Effective stakeholder consultation and engagement are critical factors in project success (Khang and Moe, 2008). The performance of ID projects mainly depends on the contribution of key stakeholders (Ika and Hodgson, 2014). The active participation of stakeholders at different stages contributes to ID project success (Ika and Donnelly, 2017; Parker et al., 2018). Governments typically appoint representatives on steering committees to oversee ID projects. The government representative’s role is limited to regulation, monitoring, and security purposes. Government bodies, authorities, and regulatory agencies are identified as highly influential stakeholders in projects. Particularly, in developing countries, government bodies can restrain or enable the project activities (Sallinen et al., 2013). Similarly, the project beneficiaries in the community are the key stakeholders in ID projects and their engagement in project management is essential to improving project impact (Yalegama et al., 2016). The NGOs are accountable to deliver the required benefits to beneficiaries in the community and accountable to the donors as well for the utilisation of funds. The term "social accountability" is used to describe the accountability relationship between NGOs (IPs) and beneficiaries (O’Leary, 2017). "Downward accountability" practices aim to identify the needs of beneficiaries to improve the utilisation of funds and "upward accountability" refers to sharing progress reports to donors by IPs (O’Leary, 2017). Stakeholders' involvement in the M&E of ID projects improves the evaluation process and increases the likelihood of evaluation findings usage in future projects (Fleischer and Christie, 2009). The knowledge and experience achieved form ID project stakeholders through involving them systematically during the project implementation ameliorates the project impact and improves the effectiveness of project management (Miković et al., 2020). Furthermore, community involvement in project M&E contributes to meeting the success criteria and achieving the intended project impact. Agency theory provides unique insights into the study of the relationship between the parties involved in executing the projects. The
monitoring aspect of agency theory is used to study the stakeholder’s involvement in achieving project success and to show the ultimate project impact. Hence, we propose:

**Proposition 2:** The participation of key project stakeholders in project M&E contributes to improve the project impact.

### 2.5 Agency issues in ID projects

Agency theory for projects asserts that regular monitoring of project activities can highlight project issues (Mahaney and Lederer, 2003). Agency theory highlights three issues between stakeholders: goal incongruences, information asymmetry, and risk-sharing. Given the complex web of stakeholders involved in ID projects, this paper postulates that these issues are also prevalent in ID projects. Goal incongruence is differences in the ranking of project goals between project stakeholders (Thomsen et al., 2005), and it restrains projects from achieving their organisational goals (Kehr, 2003). Goal incongruency issues arise when the goal of agents differs from their principal (Mahaney and Lederer, 2011). Information asymmetry states that in a corporate relationship, an agent is better informed than the principal, which results from hiding actions and information (Schieg, 2008). Information asymmetry issues arise between the principal and agent when the principal cannot monitor the hidden knowledge, intentions, competencies, and actions of the agent (Wright et al., 2001). The probability of information asymmetry issues in short-term relationships is relatively higher (Eisenhardt, 1989). Risk aversion refers to a principal and agent having different approaches and preferences towards risk (Eisenhardt, 1989). The principal, or the owner, prefers risks for the maximum outcome, on the other hand, the manager who is responsible for the implementation of project activities is risk-averse and prefers to transfer or avoid risk. Eventually, the different preferences of risk-sharing creates conflict between the principal and agent (Eisenhardt, 1989). ID projects experience high risk and challenges during the execution of project activities (Schroeder and Hatton, 2012), and risk management is a prerequisite for improving project impact (Besner and Hobbs, 2012).

Based on agency pathways, project monitoring is carried out to address agency issues and to improve project performance (Mahaney and Lederer, 2011; Maestrini et al., 2018). Furthermore, the agency theory provides a theoretical foundation to study the role of project monitoring in projects (Mahaney and Lederer, 2010) and gives a substantial explanation for
project success and failure (Mahaney and Lederer, 2011). These assertions from the literature suggest that a better understanding of the M&E role enables the stakeholders to use it as the principal supervisory mechanism to resolve agency issues during the execution of ID projects. Drawing on the agency theory, this leads us to suggest the use of M&E as the supervisory mechanism because it has the potential to resolve the agency issues, and therefore, enables the ID project stakeholders to achieve the project goals. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Proposition 3**: The M&E system can ameliorate goal incongruences and information asymmetry issues between the stakeholders of the ID projects that improve the project impact.

**Proposition 4**: M&E activities orchestrate decisions for effective risk-sharing across stakeholders that improve ID project impact.

3 **Methodology**

The qualitative research strategy is adopted to explore the attitudes, behaviour and experience of the ID project participants (Dawson, 2019). This research strategy is adopted to uncover knowledge and uncertainty regarding the research problem and to acquire rich data (Domegan and Fleming, 2007). We used thematic analysis to analyse the interview data, which is a widely used method for analysing data in social sciences (Braun and Clarke, 2014). The software NVIVO was used to analyse the data, and thematic analysis was implemented by following key steps such as becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, an inductive approach is followed to test the four propositions and to answer the research question. Inductive coding identifies important issues raised by the participants and it allows the data to "speak for itself" (Hennink et al., 2020). The research design is motivated by Müller et al. (2015) – a qualitative study that used interview narratives to test the a priori research propositions derived from theory.

The population for this study was segmented on a few criteria such as more than ten years of work experience with donors and implementing partners in executing ID projects. The data were collected through in-depth interviews and all interviews were conducted online, audio recorded and transcribed. Overall, thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals having work experience with donors and IPs (see Table I). The interviews were
held with steering committee members from government department, M&E officers, managers and directors from IP and donor organisations. The interview guidelines were developed from the literature on ID projects, M&E, and agency theory to test four priori research prepositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Work Experience</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I 1</td>
<td>Donor</td>
<td>45 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 2</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>1 h</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 3</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>1.5 h</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 4</td>
<td>Donor</td>
<td>1 h</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 5</td>
<td>IP</td>
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<td>I 6</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>1 h</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 7</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>1 h 18 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 8</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>48 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I 9</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>1 h 5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 10</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>1.5 h</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 11</td>
<td>Donor and IP</td>
<td>1 h 5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 12</td>
<td>Steering committee</td>
<td>1 h</td>
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<tr>
<td>I 13</td>
<td>Steering committee</td>
<td>40 min</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Interview respondents summary

An equal number of participants from both IP and donors were recruited for this study, while steering committee participants were few in this research due to their limited participation in ID project execution. The required number of participants for this study is guided by a theoretical principle known as, "saturation" (Glaser and Strauss, 2009; Saunders et al., 2016) which suggests that further data collection for qualitative studies can stop if no new codes or themes emerge (Francis et al., 2010). Furthermore, the "theoretical sampling" strategy was also followed to fill the gap in the data from each data set (Ligita et al., 2019). The saturation point was obtained through an iterative process where some data was collected initially, the variation in issues raised was analysed, and data collection continued until the saturation point was achieved (Hennink et al., 2020). Where applicable, additional documents from the interviewees were sought and examined to corroborate the interview responses.

Snowball sampling (chain sampling) was used to recruit participants with specific characteristics. This strategy is suitable for in-depth interviews and it is focused on hiring people through social networks (Hennink et al., 2020). The variety in participants recruitment is ensured by initiating different starting points for recruitment, and diverse experience participants were selected to provide a variety of informants (Hennink et al., 2020). This study targets fewer participants due to a homogeneous population that have similar characteristics (participants working with ID projects) (Hennink et al., 2020) and a 13 sample size is sufficient for the general study (Saunders et al., 2016).
3.1 Validity and reliability

The qualitative reliability of the research is achieved by the consistent approach employed by different researchers, which was ensured by developing an interview protocol before starting interviews that was used for all interviews (Gibbs, 2007). The reliability of this study was addressed by following Gibbs (2007), by regularly checking of transcripts to ensure that the data do not contain obvious mistakes and ensuring that there is no drift in the definition of codes by constantly comparing data with codes. The validity of data was achieved by using rich and thick descriptions to convey the theme and by spending extensive time with participants (Creswell, 2009). The ethics approval was obtained from the concerned country's government. The interview guidelines were started with the aim and objective of the study, interview guidelines, informed consent, and data protocols.

4 Results and Findings

The first proposition (P1) identifies the role of M&E in generating and sharing information and the utilisation of M&E data in projects. The participation of project stakeholders in project M&E in meeting project success and improving project impact is explored in the proposition (P2). Similarly, propositions 3 and 4 relate M&E contribution to addressing the agency issues between the stakeholders of ID projects. The relationship between the emerging theme from the interview data to the concerned theoretically derived proposition is summarised in Table II. It shows that the interview data are highly aligned with the propositions, which confirms the proposed propositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent theme</th>
<th>Aggregation of themes</th>
<th>Link to proposition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generate information</td>
<td>Data collection and information sharing through M&amp;E activities in ID projects</td>
<td>Evidence for Proposition 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Track and share progress</td>
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<td>Corrective measures</td>
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<td>Information utilisation</td>
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<td>Decision making and learning</td>
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<td>Internal and external M&amp;E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement in decision making</td>
<td>Stakeholders’ participation in M&amp;E to improve project impact</td>
<td>Evidence for Proposition 2</td>
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<td>Downward accountability</td>
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<td>Stakeholders’ success criteria</td>
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<td>Unaligned success criteria</td>
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<td>Stakeholders’ priorities</td>
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<td>Beneficiaries’ selection</td>
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Table II: Evidence for propositions

### 4.1 M&E in ID projects (P1)

The interviewees all agree that both monitoring and evaluation are equally important in ID projects. Interviewee 7 summarises this view as follows:

"M&E is an integral part of project management [in ID projects] and both "monitoring" and "evaluation" go hand in hand. Though they are mutually inclusive but still both have [a] unique identity."

All interviewees also seem to hold a common viewpoint that M&E plays an important role during the project life cycle to collect data, share information, and track results to improve project impact. Next, we discuss the relevant emerging themes that would help us to test the P1.

#### 4.1.1 Data collection and information sharing in ID projects

ID project M&E is conducted internally and externally as illustrated in Figure 2 to generate the information at different stages of the project life cycle and to meet the information requirements of multiple stakeholders. One interviewee explained that:

"M&E is all about the systematic collecting of data, based on the analysis of the data basically whether the project is moving in the right direction, or do we need any kind of course correction" (interviewee 4).

M&E tools are used to conduct research studies and to collect routine data against project activities. The following tools were mentioned by interviewee 6:
"The source of collecting primary data for research studies include surveys, workshops, discussions, focus groups, success stories, observations and interviews with the community ".

Another interviewee pointed to the importance of the M&E plan as

"a key tool to provide information about the data collection plan, which includes information about the frequency of data, quality standard of data and responsible person for collecting information " (interviewee 7).

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that the information collected through different techniques is shared through regular project reports by the M&E team, such as weekly, quarterly and monthly progress reports produced to meet the management information flow. These reports cover information related to project progress, financial expenditure, physical progress, accounts, management and staffing information.

4.1.2 Tracking the project progress

Internal M&E is conducted by the internal M&E team of the IP. One participant highlights the key purpose of internal monitoring as follows:

"The internal M&E information is used internally by management and project team members for corrective measures and decision making " (interviewee 9). Another interviewee identifies the importance of internal monitoring as follows: "Internal monitoring is critical because it identifies anomalies and helps to take [corrective] ... measures before the donor comes and highlights the project weaknesses, while the external monitoring is conducted by donor agencies or a third-party conduct monitoring on behalf of the donor" (interviewee 8).

The fundamental role of M&E in ID projects is to collect data periodically to track intended or unintended changes and to track project progress indicators from the inception to the achievement of the outcome. This was highlighted by a participant as:

"M&E gives information on how inputs are used, processed, [as well as] how the outputs are delivered and how the outcome is achieved " (interviewee 2). Furthermore, "M&E team is a neutral eye on project activities to identify and [track the progress]" (interviewee 8), and "the M&E function works for course correction, addresses the communities' voices, shows the right direction, and highlights the weaknesses at the right time" (interviewee 8).
Moreover, the course correction ensures quality in project activities that eventually helps to attain the desired project impact. Monitoring is the continuous assessment of project activities, and it ensures that the investment is made in the right place because if the project is not on the right track, no matter how large the investment, the results will not be productive. One interviewee linked accountability to tracking in the following way:

"To ensure the accountability you need these eyes and ears to track the results" (interviewee 3).

Evaluations are usually conducted by the donor at a specific point such as the beginning, middle, end and after project implementation. However, one participant explained the evaluation patterns of IP: "some IPs conduct internal evaluations, sometimes they are called 'rapid assessment' to see whether we are on track or not " (interviewee 3).

4.1.3 Result of Proposition 1

Based on the two themes, broad support for P1 is found as the codes generated from the interview narrative overlapped to a larger extent with the theoretically derived proposition shown in Table II. The data indicates that ID projects use multiple M&E activities at different project stages to collect and share data with concerned stakeholder for corrective measures and for evidence based decision making. Therefore, it is concluded that P1 holds for our data.

4.2 Stakeholders’ participation in M&E to improve project impact (P2)

M&E’s role in improving stakeholders’ participation in ID projects and how stakeholders’ involvement shapes project impact is explored in proposition 2.

Most participants conclude that the community is not involved in planning, decision-making and the monitoring of project activities. One participant mentioned that communities are involved in decision-making through community dialogues, but only in community-based projects. Three participants have mentioned that sometimes they are involved and sometimes not, depending on the nature of the project and the donor. One participant explained the current approach of donors:
"Donors are now rarely adopting the downward accountability as projects are donor driven. It means the voice, complaints and concerns of the community are not addressed and documented while designing [a] project" (interviewee 6).

Some interviewees also indicated pre-approved M&E designs which may or may not allow the participation of the community for the M&E of ID projects. The different approaches for community involvement were described as follows:

"In some specific projects, the IPs involve community in monitoring, such as hot line numbers [being] provided to report any issue or feedback and conduct perception surveys " (interviewee 6).

During the evaluation, the communities are interviewed to measure the result and impact of the project. Similarly, most respondents mentioned that community is not involved formally in decision making and M&E, because they do not believe in beneficiaries' skills, and due to budget constraints and communication gaps. Ideally, their involvement is a mandatory requirement for the successful implementation of the project as emphasised by a participant: "Community is at the center, and they drive the process of development, the NGOs and other partners, they need to be fully aligned with local requirements... They cannot work independently. If they do then there will be no success " (interviewee 1).

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that communities should be involved in a way that allows them to identify the indicators for project success. However, sometimes they are involved in the M&E of project activities to get feedback from beneficiaries. In community-based projects, the indicators related to community feedback have been developed in a log frame to ensure community representation. The conventional M&E system has evolved, and the participatory M&E system is introduced in ID projects. This system ensures the participation of all stakeholders in project implementation. For example, interviewee 4 mentioned:

"The community-based projects experience shows that the management of projects and M&E is easy if the true needs of the community are identified by the communities themselves. Conversely, if the issues have been identified by the organisation for example, without taking care of the Indigenous knowledge of the communities in that scenario it becomes difficult to achieve the intended aim of the project ".

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The steering committee members from government departments are influential stakeholders and they link the project to the government. They are mainly responsible for monitoring the project activities in donor intervention projects and participating in monthly project review meetings. The interview data shows that steering committee members are rarely involved in project planning, designing, and implementation. Eventually, the steering committee members get limited information about M&E. On the other hand, one participant mentioned that:

"It has been noticed that government monitors the project activities properly if they have been given extra incentives " (interviewee 3).

The impact of ID projects on the community chiefly depends on the success criteria of stakeholders in projects. The results show that the success criteria of project stakeholders differ from one another, and the success criteria depend on the level of engagement of stakeholders as mentioned by interviewee 7:

"There is no one size fits all, and all the stakeholders have different criteria".

However, M&E activities help in selecting the appropriate beneficiaries and identifying the true needs of the community. For example, the M&E activities such as formative evaluation and situational analysis contribute to converging the deviating interests of stakeholders and eventually contribute to aligning the success criteria of stakeholders to achieve the ultimate project impact.

The success criteria of communities are different from other stakeholders, and participants mentioned that this can be improved by involving the stakeholders in M&E activities. Stakeholder analysis is an important activity which helps to prioritise the needs, interests, and importance level of each stakeholder. The information generated from stakeholder analysis can be used to develop a project plan that includes project activities and indicators based on the real needs of the community. However, it is found that very few projects conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify the real needs of communities yet, stakeholders’ engagement during project implementation increases the probability of meeting success criteria and contributes to improving long-term impact.

The participants highlight that the more you empower beneficiaries about the objectives and indicators of a project, the more likely they will take interest in the success of a project. In
addition, the project impact also depends on how systematically the beneficiaries' selection process has been carried out. The data show that the success criterion of the IP and the donor should be aligned, and by design, they are not supposed to have different success criteria. The success criteria of the IP and the donor is to meet what has been agreed in the log frame and result-based framework.

The role of government in ID projects is to regulate and facilitate at a broader community and local government level. Some respondents mentioned that government is only concerned about tangible benefits and the government will declare the project successful if it contributes to the government's prioritised issues and specific areas of interest. The success criteria of government in any project depends on their stake in the concerned project as shared by Interviewee 11:

“If the government has no share or stake in the project, then they may not show interest in results” (interviewee 12).

4.2.1 Result of Proposition Test – P2

The M&E role in strengthening stakeholders’ participation is suggested in P2, and most of the information from the interviews is aligned with the proposed proposition 2 as mentioned in Table II. The thematic analyses suggest that stakeholders' (beneficiaries/community and government representatives) participation is ensured through M&E activities to improve project impact. M&E activities manage project output, outcomes, and indicators according to stakeholders' preferences. The interview data also indicate that some projects are unable to show the required impact on the community due to the lack of active involvement from key stakeholders. The results suggest that formative analysis and needs assessment can contribute to overcoming these differences by identifying the shared priorities of stakeholders. In conclusion, regular involvement of stakeholders in M&E contribute to improving the project impact. Therefore, we conclude that P2 holds for this sample.

4.3 M&E in addressing goal incongruences and information asymmetry in ID projects (P3)

Propositions P3 examines the agency issues such as goal incongruence and information asymmetry issues between the stakeholders and how these affect project impact.
4.3.1 Goal incongruence among stakeholders of ID projects:

The interview responses indicate that, generally, goals of ID project stakeholders are incongruent. The participant mentioned that all the stakeholders do not have incongruent goals in the context of projects implemented by the government. Usually, the goal of any project is based on the priorities of donors and IPs. The participants highlighted some strategies to resolve the goal incongruence between the stakeholders:

"If you give a clear picture of project goal to stakeholders in the very beginning, [for example] this is how the project is going to work, and this is how you are going to benefit, then their expectation and ownership would not be at a different level " (interviewee 3). In addition, interviewee 5 stated: "The needs assessment study is conducted prior to project implementation to identify the suitable stakeholders and needs of the community. This information is fed into the project plan to develop the sub indicators to achieve the ultimate project goal. Sometimes, IPs do not conduct the needs assessment process at the start of the project that eventually ends up with goal incongruences. The issue is not with the goal directly, but the beneficiaries' selection ".

The goal of an ID project should be consistent between the donor and IP and developed together through a formal memorandum of understanding before starting the project, which documents the scope of the project. However, our data tells us that sometimes the IPs and donors cannot share the actual goal of the project if the community is in culturally sensitive regions. For example, interviewee 6 stated:

"The donor goal would be different from the recipients because the donor has the broader vision ". Similarly, Interviewee 2 mentioned: "Government has its own ongoing set up, the development project activities are considered an extra burden by government staff. Therefore, the goal of government is sometimes not aligned with the goal of the project ".

This shows that goal incongruence issues emerge due to a lack of understanding of the expectations of stakeholders. An ID project involves multiple stakeholders, and each has their own unique interests and expectations. For example, governments and communities always want financial and in-kind support from donors which is not possible in every project as most projects are based on soft interventions. The participants highlighted some reasons for goal incongruence. For example, interviewee 4 stated:
"The financer of any project donor has their interest; it is not that the organisation is only interested in poverty reduction area but at the same time it also wants some visibility ". Similarly, interviewee 10 mentioned "The definition of goal[s] in the development sector is the "expected impact ". The goal incongruences are called driving forces, wasted interest … [from a] development perspective. The donor is the driving force and has certain requirements for interventions. The government wants to see the work mechanically, and they are not keen on other things such as gender, pluralism, transparency, etc. Beneficiaries are also not interested in any of these, they need tangible benefits. Every group has its concerns, so these will create problems ".

To resolve this goal incongruence, the participants mentioned that a good M&E system aligns the goal of stakeholders which contributes to achieving the required project impact. M&E activities play an important role in the planning stage to align goals, but it depends on how independent the M&E system is, as mentioned by interviewee11:

"M&E activities are used to align the interest of stakeholders through establishing congruent goals. For example, the needs assessment activity of M&E identifies the needs of stakeholders and the perspective of different stakeholders can be incorporated to get the congruent goals ".

### 4.3.2 Information Asymmetry in ID projects

The basic purpose of M&E is to generate and deliver the right information to the right person at the right time. The level of information sharing depends on the stake and interest of each stakeholder. Interviewee 5 highlights that a lack of a robust communication plan creates information asymmetry issues:

"The development projects barely identify the key stakeholders for communication, level of information shared, and mode of communication ". The information is shared periodically in ID projects. Similarly, participants shared different modes of sharing information in projects at different levels:

"The information is shared weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual, and yearly, and the frequency of information sharing depends on the scope and the resources available for the project" (Interviewee 4). " Usually, the formal information is shared through reports and only donors receive the formal project information, while publicly it is shared through websites, electronic
media, and radio programs" (interviewee 3). However, "the other formal means of sharing information include information, education, and communication material, quarterly and monthly reporting, lesson learned workshops, and progress review seminars" (interviewee 6).

The IPs usually share the agreed information with the donor, and the information is almost shared equally between them. However, some interviewees said that the community and government are not well informed. Further, in most cases, government agencies complain that they are not kept in the loop when the projects are being designed, as highlighted by interviewee 7:

"The asymmetric information in projects is not uncommon and [not] unusual in ID projects, it happens because of information power. If the donor and all stakeholders are knowledgeable and informed, they can acquire the required information".

Moreover, information sharing depends upon the needs and type of stakeholders. For example, "Financial information cannot be shared with the government and communities" (interviewee 8). However, another participant further mentioned that: "It is not important to share all the project-related documents, but the basic information should be delivered to beneficiaries such as the result of the project. Due to information protocols, we cannot share all the information with the beneficiaries" (interviewee 11). "However, involving all the beneficiaries is expensive" (interviewee 3).

The M&E team collects reliable information from the field activities, triangulates information through different methods and shares it in the form of a progress report with decision makers within the organisation and donors, as a participant explained:

"M&E [help to] triangulate the information and presents [it] in a way that it is easily understood. For example, the raw information is not easy to understand, but if you have drafted it into graphs, projections, charts and tables then it is easy to understand for intended audiences" (interviewee 3).

M&E plays an important role in generating, sharing and disseminating information within the scope of the project:

"The M&E role is to interact with the project sponsor, project team members, regulatory authorities’ beneficiaries, to collect useful information from stakeholders. This interaction is
made at multiple levels which is why it is believed that the M&E team are project reviewers and assurance members and become mentors for the project team" (interviewee 7). M&E includes field activities to monitor whether actions are being done properly. For example, "… in the field activities, the M&E team can address the voices of communities and can improve the communication gaps" (interviewee 11).

4.3.3  Result of Proposition Test – P3

The goal incongruences between stakeholders emerge due to the different roles and expectations of each stakeholder, lack of strategy to develop a common goal for all stakeholders, donor-driven project planning, and lack of understanding of stakeholders’ expectations during the project initiation and project planning stage. As indicated by the respondents, activities such as need assessment plans recorded in the M&E activities can help establish goal alignment between multiple stakeholders, improving ID projects' impact. Information asymmetry issues are also common between the stakeholders due to a lack of funding and a robust communication plan to share the required information with key stakeholders. The multiple M&E activities designed for different stages can resolve the information asymmetry issues in ID projects. In conclusion, the interview data is highly aligned with proposed proposition 3 (see Table II) that purports M&E activities’ role in ameliorating goal incongruence and information asymmetry issues in ID projects.

4.4  Risk-sharing in ID projects P4

Risk management approaches in ID projects vary from partner to partner and donor to donor, as the participants explained.

"The nature of risk depends on the nature of the project, targeted communities, and the target region. However, some risks are generic in ID projects such as rule and regulation, NOC from government and acceptance from communities" (interviewee 5). "[A] risk management log is used to manage the risk factors with the close coordination of the program and M&E team. The program department is responsible [for] identifying the potential risk factors and M&E is responsible [for] monitor[ing] and report[ing] those risks. Risk management depends on the donor structure. Some donors manage the risk with the support of the program team, and some do through the M&E team" (interviewee 3).
An interviewee reflected on the current approaches towards risk management and highlighted some recommendations to improve risk management:

"According to current donor practices, the risk management plan is part of a project plan, and it is updated quarterly. Ideally, a risk management plan should be part of the needs assessment. The risk management plan is developed based on secondary information, and we are not sure to what extent the information is realistic. Therefore, the risk management plan should be extracted from the needs assessment study" (interviewee 5).

The needs assessment helps the adaptation of existing risk management plan because the literature suggests “observing for opportunities and risks and acting in a timely manner” is a key attribute of effective monitoring activities for ID projects (Ika and Donnelly, 2017, p. 56). This indicates that an effective M&E system would help to identify, manage and report risks on time.

The participants also highlight the role of M&E in addressing the risk in different ways: For example, interviewee 2 stated:

"If there are risks that make the project not implementable then the project M&E team can monitor the risk, to see the likelihood of the risk being realized. If the risk is constantly monitored … then we can manage the risk properly. If the risk is not monitored properly, the potential risks become reality”.

Interviewee 6 provided further details on the role M&E plays in the orchestration of the decision-making for risk-sharing across multiple stakeholders:

"There are some triggers of risk, and they should be well defined in the risk management plan. It includes identifying the triggers and monitoring the triggers, assigning the responsibilities, generating reports and actions to be taken. M&E can be effectively utilised to refine the risk management plan by defining the indicators for triggers. M&E can be utilised to report potential risks such as financial risk, quality risk, etc. Regular monitoring and periodic evaluations identify bottlenecks in addressing risks and can improve the timely decision-making".

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4.4.1 Result of Proposition Test – P4

Based on the above responses, it is concluded that P4 is supported because M&E plays a substantial role in orchestrating joint decision-making for risk-sharing between the IPs and the donors, which contributes to improving ID project impact. Furthermore, the interview data analyses confirm the alignment of interview themes with proposed proposition 4 as shown in Table II.

5 Discussion

The empirical support for the four research propositions makes the following important contributions to both theory and practice.

5.1 Implications for Theory

The first contribution of this study lies in establishing that regular M&E activities in ID projects generate and share information that improves the project impact. The conceptualisation of ID projects stakeholder dynamics as essentially a “principal-agent” relationship emphasised how the lesson learned and knowledge generated by an M&E can improve project impact. At a broader level, it addresses the current lack of cross-learning between ID projects and project management tools and techniques (Ika et al., 2020). At a more granular level, it establishes M&E as a critical activity that builds trust-based relationships between ID project stakeholders (Shevchenko et al., 2020) which is likely to improve ID projects impact. The support for P1 also builds on recent evidence in the literature such as Odhiambo et al. (2020) and Kananura et al. (2017). Both these studies found that the information generated through M&E informs decision-making and facilitates planning, therefore ensuring that project objectives are met.

The second contribution of this study lies in establishing that M&E activities strengthen the stakeholders’ relationships for ID project success. The literature recognises that the diverse stakeholders relationships are complex in ID projects (Ika et al., 2021) but how to manage the complex web of stakeholders’ relationships in ID projects is still open for debate. The results from this study suggest that stakeholders' (community and government representatives) participation in M&E leads to improved project impact because M&E activities ensure that ID project indicators and outcomes are synchronised with the preferences of stakeholders. This new finding has important implications for theory because it suggests that M&E is the principal
mechanism that enables meaningful stakeholders’ participation. Past studies recognise that community participation is rarely observed during project planning and decision making which leads to ID project failures. For example, World Bank projects have been criticised because of their inability to build capacity and organisational skills at the community level to own the projects (Platteau and Gaspart, 2003). Similarly, Unerman and O'Dwyer (2010) report lack of community efforts in critically evaluating IPs activities, because they fear the project will be discontinued. The literature also agrees that the active involvement of community in project implementation shapes the perceptions of the success criteria, and therefore increases project impact (Yalegama et al., 2016; Ika and Donnelly, 2017). The empirical support for P2 contributes to this stream of literature by suggesting that participation of the key stakeholders in the M&E activities such as formative analysis and needs assessment studies aligns the priorities of stakeholders, and, therefore, meets project success criteria and improves the long-term ID project impact.

The specific ways in which M&E ameliorates the goal incongruence and information asymmetry in ID project is the third major contribution of this study (P3). The relationship between the principal and different agents is driven by self-interest and different expectations (Ahola et al., 2021) resulting in incongruent goals for ID projects. This study shows that the M&E activities can align the deviating goals during the project planning phase to achieve the desired project impact. The finding which highlights the ability of M&E to resolve goal incongruence for ID projects is a first in the literature and supplements the similar assertions by Mahaney and Lederer (2011) for software projects. Furthermore, it supports the finding that aligning incongruent goal has a positive effect on project outcome, which correlates with the findings of Barki and Hartwick (2001). The information asymmetry issues are common in long-distance projects (Boeh and Beamish, 2015), and in ID projects these issues emerge between the stakeholders due to a lack of a robust communication mechanism to share the required information with key stakeholders. The results of this study contribute to the literature by providing empirical support for the role M&E plays in managing information asymmetries for ID project impact.

The fourth contribution of this study establishes the importance of M&E in orchestrating decisions for risk-sharing across stakeholders (P4). The project donor gives funds to IPs to implement the project due to contextual challenges and it is costly for a donor to implement the project in a distant region. In addition, IPs are local with more acceptance and reach within
the target communities as compared to a donor from a foreign country. The risk factor is high in donor-driven projects which are not designed based on community needs assessment. The literature suggests that the needs assessment is a core element of effective monitoring (Ika and Donnelly, 2017), especially the identification management, and reporting of risks on time. The results of this study found that project risk is jointly managed between key stakeholders and these findings are supported by literature (Kujala et al., 2020). These findings suggest that the assumption about risk-averse nature of principal and agent is not true in the context of ID projects. The empirical support that an effective M&E system contributes to ID project impact by orchestrating decisions for effective risk-sharing between the IPs and donor is a new and significant contribution to the literature.

5.2 Practice Implications

How to improve the ID project impact has been an ongoing focus of the international funding agencies, the recipient governments, and the IPs. The results of the study inform these stakeholders by establishing M&E activities as the principal supervisory mechanism for the ID projects with the following tangible benefits. First, the managerial implication of the findings includes the establishment of an integrated M&E model in Figure 1 that establishes a logical linkage between the M&E activities and the theory of change. The sequence of M&E activities in this model enables project team members to collect data periodically and share the information with stakeholders for evidence-based decision-making which improves ID project impact. Second, M&E activities strengthen the stakeholders’ relationships by involving multiple stakeholders at different stages of ID projects to understand the needs of communities and to demonstrate the positive impact of ID projects. Third, the M&E tools enable community participation by incorporating their feedback to develop a more realistic project plan that leads to a more sustainable project impact. Fourth, effective M&E activities harmonise the competing interests of multiple ID project stakeholders by resolving the information asymmetries inherent in the complex relationships between ID project stakeholders. Finally, the M&E’s needs assessments identify the triggers of risks and the responsibilities of the IPs and donors for the risk management actions which ensures an effective sharing of ID projects risks.
6 Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study draws on agency theory to establish M&E as a critical set of activities in ID projects to improve the project impact. A qualitative research design was employed to test four a priori propositions that were derived from the literature. The M&E activities aim to collect the project information through tracking project progress against the project indicators. This information is collected through internal and external M&E activities and each M&E activity is carried out with specific aim to ensure the accountability in project activities. The information generated by the M&E activities is used for project planning, assessment, corrective measures, evidence-based decision-making, and to obtain lessons learned to improve project impact, this supports proposition 1. The participation of community in project implementation is ensured through formative evaluation and need assessment that aim to identify the true needs of community. This study establishes that M&E strengthens the stakeholders’ relationships through aligning the success criteria between the stakeholders which supports proposition 2. Goal incongruences and information asymmetry issues are common between the stakeholders of ID projects due to different roles and expectations of each stakeholder. The utilisation of data from a baseline and need assessment studies contributes to align the goal of each stakeholder and the adoption of M&E activities designed for each phase of the project reduces the information asymmetry issues, and supports proposition 3. ID projects are prone to multiple risks, and project risk is assessed by using management tools before project implementation. The M&E activities contribute to monitor and report the risk factors that affect project progress. Project risk is equally shared between project donor and IPs in ID projects; these findings supports proposition 4.

Notwithstanding the novel insights this study generates, there are some limitations of the findings. First, the empirical context of this study represents a single geographical setting; therefore, generalisation of this study’s findings to other settings would require additional studies on this topic. Second, though the saturation strategy was used to determine an appropriate number of respondents (Francis et al., 2010) for this study, the final number of respondents may look smaller when compared to similar studies. Third, the research design employed for this study explored the attitudes, behaviour, and experiences of the ID project participants from the IPs, donors, and government perspectives. Future studies that also include the community perspective may augment the findings of this study.
References


