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**Integrating Evaluation into Program Cycle – Opportunities and Challenges**

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**Objectives/aims**

Program evaluation is a powerful instrument in the hand of program administrators, donor’s governments, and citizens to make value judgment on the merits and worth of a program intervention. Evaluation uses research as well as critical and evaluative thinking and methods to assess and understand the merit, worth and value of what is being done and achieved; how and why it is working and impacting (or not) over time; and for whom, from whose perspective, at what cost and under what circumstances. It can be used to inform the design of any intervention from local to global level, its implementation at any stage of its lifetime, and the difference it has made - even years after the intervention has ended. All of this is done to hold responsible people accountable, build new knowledge, and inform and improve ongoing and new plans, budgets and actions.

**Methods**

Literature Review

**Main findings**

Key challenge being faced by Africa development practitioners, donors, program management and administrators and government is the ability to continuously and regularly capture the progress, success and failures of program intervention, to assess and make judgment on the input being used, process being established and key output achievement, demonstrate program outcomes and impacts and make determine whether these have been achieved cost effectively. The ability to inform management decisions, strategic planning and risk management, provide accountability to Africa stakeholders and contribute to broader knowledge and learning in the field of development is a challenge that need to be addressed by integrated program evaluation.

A well-integrated evaluation throughout the program cycle – from Program concept development, proposal development and approval process, grant agreement development, program start-up, program implementation and monitoring, program closeout and finally post program review and renewal provides the data, information, and knowledge need to effectively and efficiently manage and assess the merit and worth of program intervention. Planning and implementing a well thought program evaluation and monitoring system contributes to the measurement of the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of program intervention and investments, provides regular Information for evidence-based management decision making at all levels, provides Information for evidence-based accountability and transparency, and supports for policy making for development.

There is great opportunity for program evaluation to make a difference in the way Africa development initiatives have been implemented and evaluated. Africa’s development models have often not served it well, and its evaluation has often been donor driven and tended to weaken its potential and its power. Developing an innovative Integrated program evaluation with new thinking and opportunities to experiment within its own evolving contexts and cultures, drawing on fresh ways of doing and knowing from around the world can make evaluation invaluable in supporting development initiatives.