

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND PERFORMANCE OF  
PROJECTS FUNDED BY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE OF  
FRESHFIRE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL, GHANA**

**BY**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
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IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

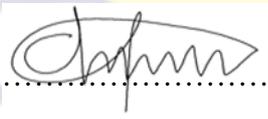
I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature .....  ..... Date .....

Name: Samuel Nyatsikor (Rev.)

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the Christian Service University College

Supervisor's Signature .....  ..... Date .....

Name: Charles Dwumfour Osei, PhD

## ABSTRACT

The research aimed to investigate the impact of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International, a faith-based organization in Ghana. To attain this objective, the mixed research approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were utilized. This approach enabled the researcher to amalgamate the strengths of both methodologies, corroborate the findings via methodological triangulation, and enhance the validity of the outcomes. Within the framework of the mixed method, the cross-sectional descriptive research design was employed using a total of 206 sampled respondents comprising project officers, church leaders, donors and church members. Both researches designed Questionnaires and interview guides were utilized as the main instruments for the data collection and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results were presented in tables. The study revealed that the dominant method used for M&E process is surveys or questionnaires. This suggests that this method is considered effective within the context of these projects and maybe a standard part of the M&E processes. Stakeholder competency in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has a substantial impact on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. Stakeholder competency significantly aids in revealing the strengths and weaknesses of these projects. Also, the study found that the application of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) outcomes significantly impacts the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

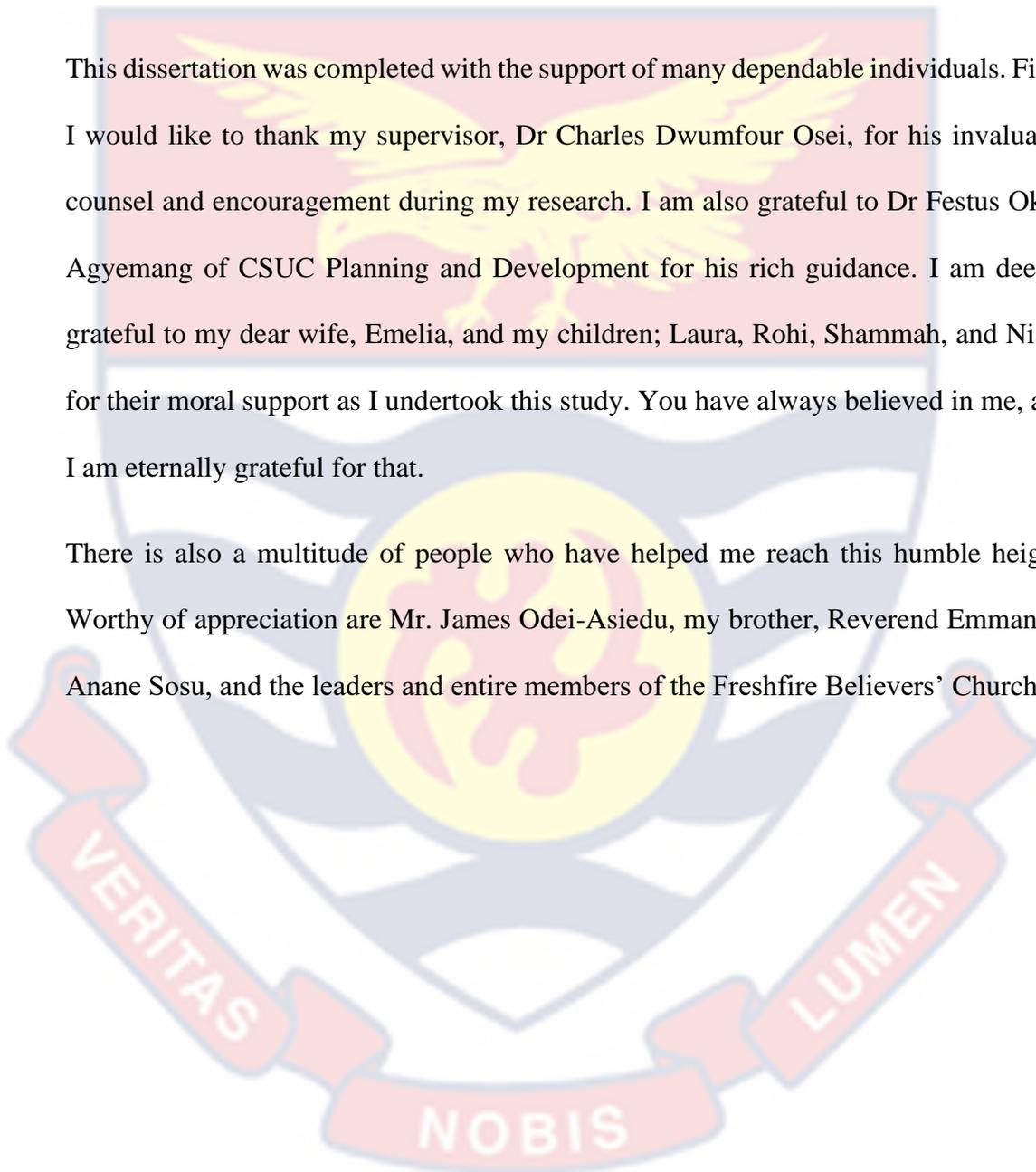
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I dedicate this research work to Quynn Ama Konadu Adepa Odei-Asiedu.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my source of strength throughout this journey.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

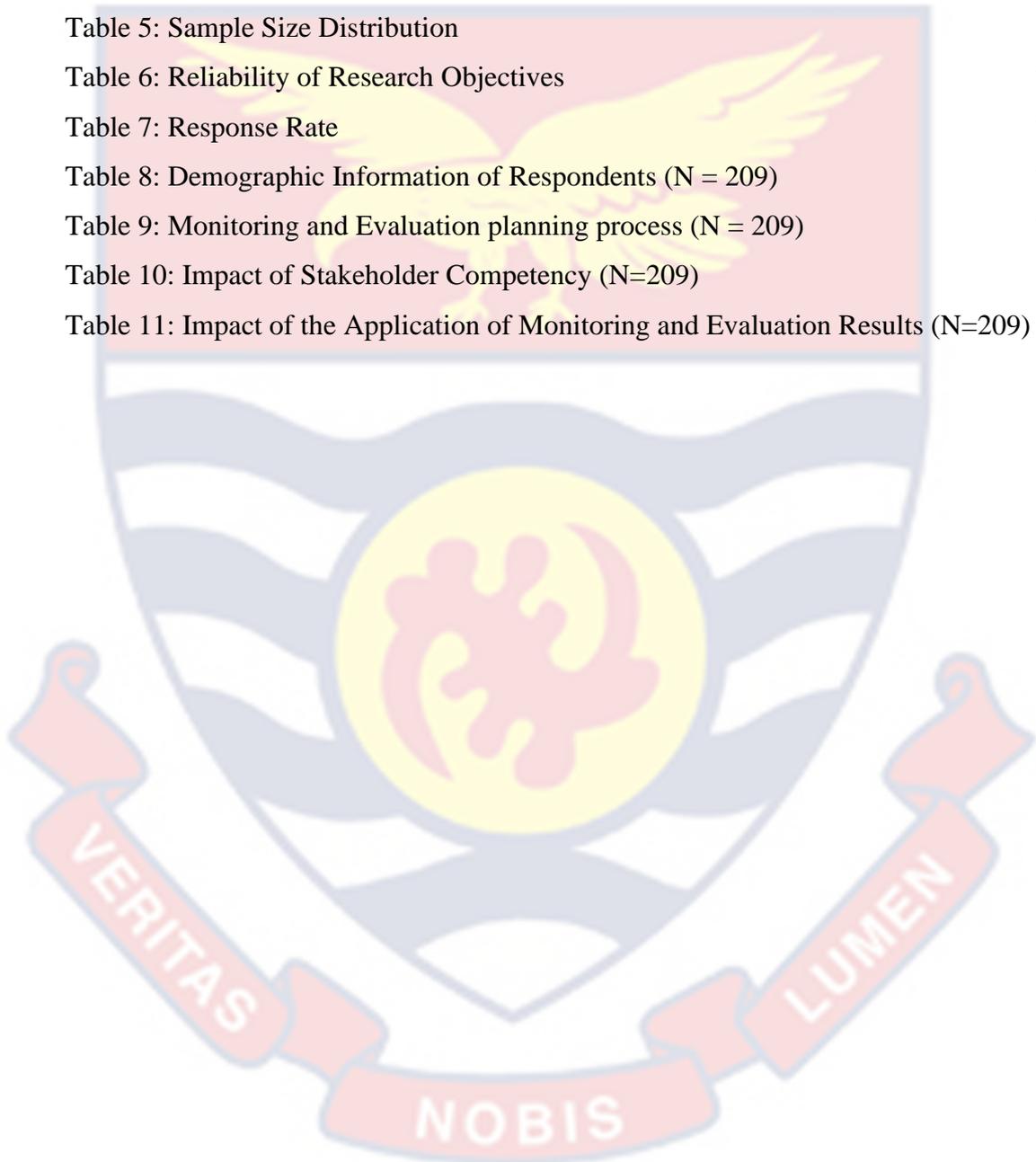
<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Background to Study	2
Problem Statement	5
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	<b>8</b>
Research Objectives	9
Research Questions	9
Significance of the Study	9
Delimitation of the Study	10
Limitation of the Study	11
Definition of Terms	11
Organization of the Study	13
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>15</b>
Introduction	15
Theoretical Review	15
Theory of Change	15
Results-Based Management Theory	17
Realistic Evaluation Theory	18
Program Theory	19
Monitoring and Evaluation Planning and Systems	23
Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation and Program Performance	28
Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Planning	29

Biblical Foundation of Program Monitoring and Evaluation	33
Faith-Based Organizations and Development	34
Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Performance	38
Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems	41
Empirical Literature Review	44
Impact of Monitoring and Evaluation Planning on the Performance of Projects	45
Impact of Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation on the Performance of Projects	46
Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results on the Performance of Projects	48
Investigate the impact of M & E data Collection and Analysis on the Performance of Projects	49
The moderation Effects of Government Policy and Stakeholder Attitude on the Relationship between M & E Principles and on the Performance of Projects	50
Research Gaps	52
Conceptual Framework	53
Chapter Summary	54
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODS</b>	<b>56</b>
Introduction	56
Research Approach	56
Research Design	59
Study Area	60
Population	62
Sample	64
Sampling Procedure	65
Research Instrument	66
Data Collection Process	67
Data Analysis	68
Content Analysis	68
Ethical Consideration	70
Pilot Test	70
Chapter Summary	72

<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>73</b>
Introduction	73
Questionnaire Response Rate	73
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	74
Discussion	77
Research Question One: Monitoring and Evaluation planning process.	77
Research Question Two: Impact of Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation	86
Research Question Three: Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results	90
Chapter Summary	95
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>96</b>
Overview of the Study	96
Summary of Research Findings	96
Conclusions	99
Recommendations	99
Suggestions for Further Studies	100
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>117</b>
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CHURCH MEMBERS	117
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CHURCH LEADERS AND DONORS	120

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Complementarity between Monitoring and Evaluation	26
Table 2: Monitoring vs Evaluation	27
Table 3: Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation	28
Table 4: Distribution of Population by Status and their Description	63
Table 5: Sample Size Distribution	65
Table 6: Reliability of Research Objectives	71
Table 7: Response Rate	74
Table 8: Demographic Information of Respondents (N = 209)	75
Table 9: Monitoring and Evaluation planning process (N = 209)	78
Table 10: Impact of Stakeholder Competency (N=209)	87
Table 11: Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results (N=209)	91



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Source: Kaberia (2019)

54



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

The success and perpetual progress of every project aimed at benefitting individuals and organizations rest on better monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. The use of M&E systems is essential in evaluating the effectiveness of development projects, as they aid in tracking progress and identifying areas that need improvement. Faith-based organizations, including Freshfire Church International in Ghana, have actively funded development projects to support their communities. However, like any development project, it is crucial to have effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the intended goals and objectives are met. According to Rogers et al. (2021), the success of development projects is highly dependent on the effectiveness of their M&E systems. Despite this, the impact of M&E systems on the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations like Freshfire Church International, Ghana, has not been thoroughly examined.

This study intends to examine how monitoring and evaluation procedures affect the effectiveness of projects supported by faith-based groups. The case study for this investigation is Freshfire Church International in Ghana. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, a comprehensive overview will be presented, including the study's background, problem statement, and the significance of the research. As a result, the study will delineate the research priorities along with the extent and limitations of the investigation.

## Background to Study

The importance of monitoring and evaluating projects supported by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) cannot be overstated (Waithera & Wanyoike, 2015). Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are of utmost importance in the realm of project management by providing a structured approach to evaluating the impact of interventions and ensuring accountability to stakeholders. There has been an increasing focus on the significance of M&E systems within faith-based organizations (FBOs), as these organizations play a vital role in development initiatives across various regions worldwide (Syed et al., 2021).

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities, providing essential services and support in a variety of spheres of life, such as social welfare, education, and health (Wells et al, 2022; van Wees & Jennings, 2021; Clarke & Ware, 2015). According to (*Faith-Based Organizations Encyclopedia.com*, n.d.). FBOs can be described as collectives of individuals who come together based on shared religious or spiritual beliefs. These organizations are committed to distinct religious affiliations and frequently encompass a societal or ethical aspect. The term "faith-based organization" is more inclusive compared to "religious organization" as it encompasses not only congregational faith beliefs but also non-congregational faith beliefs (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). The primary objective of FBOs is to facilitate societal change by offering a diverse range of services (Wells et al., 2016). These services encompass acts of charity (Sethi, 2012; Herman's et al., 2011), healthcare initiatives (Yokotani et al., 2017; Yusuf, 2020), and the advocacy and safeguarding of human rights in various global locations (Yusuf, 2017; Onyango, 2019; Reynolds, 1998), among other fields of involvement. It is based on these premises that it is essential for projects funded and implemented by these

organizations to be monitored and evaluated to ensure maximum benefit to members for which they were started. Raney and Raveloharimisy (2016) emphasize that FBOs, particularly in the context of poor countries, play a crucial role in people's lives all over the world.

FBOs are groups that offer social services and have a religious motivation or affiliation (Goldsmith, Eimicke, & Pineda, 2006). These groups might have nonprofit status or not. The terms "faith-based organization" are classified by Sider and Unruh (2004) into six taxonomies: secular, faith-permeated, faith-centered, faith-affiliated, faith-background, and faith-secular partnership. These organizations are distinctive (Gomes, 2021). They have religious or spiritual underpinnings. A limited number of academics have mostly recognized the influence of their projects.

M&E systems are indispensable components of project management. A comprehensive project management approach necessitates the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation systems, which serve as an ongoing management function to assess progress towards desired outcomes and identify any obstacles in the project implementation process (*Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning and Performance Improvement Investment Learning Platform (ILP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*).

FBOs, as noted by King (2011), possess a unique position in providing social services, and their religious identity shapes their approach to development work. However, FBOs face pressure to improve their performance and exhibit dynamism in the face of competition, accountability, and cost-effectiveness. In order to attain the desired outcomes, projects should be implemented utilizing universally recognized project management techniques, including Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Controlling. They help to ensure that projects are implemented efficiently and

effectively, and that they achieve their intended outcomes. They provide a mechanism for tracking progress and identifying areas where improvements can be made (Society, 2019). Again, M&E systems help to identify and address problems early on in the project implementation process, before they become major issues. This can help to prevent delays and cost overruns (Waithera & Wanyoike, 2015). M&E systems provide a mechanism for accountability. Jeremiah & Kabeyi (2019), continues those M&E systems help to ensure that project stakeholders are held accountable for their actions and that they are delivering on their commitments. Finally, M&E systems help to build trust and credibility with project stakeholders Roberts (2010). They provide evidence of project progress and outcomes, which can help to build confidence in the project and its stakeholders.

FreshFire Church International (FFCI), Ghana is a faith-based organization that is committed to improving the lives of people in Ghana. The organization has implemented several projects in Ghana, including education, health, and community development projects. FreshFire Church International, Ghana is a member of the Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG), which is recognized by the Ghanaian government, the organization has been acknowledged as a collaborative partner of the Ministry of Health for implementation purposes and provides 30% to 40% of health services in Ghana (Ccih, 2022). The organization has set up mobile clinics that travel to remote areas to provide medical care to people who do not have access to healthcare facilities. FreshFire Church International, Ghana has implemented several health projects in Ghana, including the provision of free medical care to people in rural communities (Djalalinia, 2014). These community development projects help the citizenry and it is of great necessity to ensure that M&E systems are properly implemented for these projects to last. When proper M&E systems are not ensured,

some projects that relate to health, education, charity, sanitation etc., will abruptly end Rogers et al. (2021). It is crucial to appraise the bearing of the M&E systems on the performance of Freshfire Church International's projects. Building upon this contextual foundation, the research has made the decision to conduct a study examining the influence of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects financed by faith-based organizations, using FreshFire Church International in Ghana as case study.

### **Problem Statement**

The impact of development projects can be limited by poor project performance resulting from inadequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. For faith-based organizations (FBOs) aiming to improve the lives of people in their communities, implementing M&E systems is particularly important. However, there exists a dearth of research specifically examining the effects of these systems on project performance within FBOs, particularly in the Ghanaian context. While a few studies have investigated the evaluation of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and their impact on project performance in Ghana and other African nations (Essis et al., 2023; Kissi et al., 2019), the available literature remains limited. However, most of these studies have focused on public sector projects, with little attention given to the role of M&E systems in faith-based organization (FBO) projects Waithera & Wanyoike (2015). Similarly, studies on the performance appraisal systems in African countries have been conducted, but they have mainly focused on the public sector (Masawe & Isanzu 2020). Hence, it is imperative to conduct research that focuses on investigating the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems on the effectiveness of FBO ventures, specifically concerning FFCI. Despite the significance of establishing robust M&E systems in development initiatives financed by FBOs, a number of these

organizations, including FFCI, encounter difficulties in adhering to proper protocols. These challenges encompass the absence of clearly defined measurable indicators, inadequate stakeholder ownership and participation, as well as practical obstacles like duplicated efforts and underutilization of existing data. Systems for monitoring and evaluating performance face a number of difficulties, including issues with human capacity, both a lack of resources and monitoring and evaluation capacity in many organizations (Nyamazana, 2019). Stemler (2000), argues that developing nations may encounter additional difficulties like a lack of skill capacity, inadequate governance structures, and opaque systems. Lack of information and communication technology systems, a lack of expertise, and the high cost of computerized monitoring and evaluation systems are some of the common problems that monitoring and evaluation systems encounter (Mleke & Dida, 2020).

According to Gachoka et al. (2018), inadequate consultations with experts have led to project delays and other performance-related challenges in multiple projects. Additionally, Chigozie (2017) conducted research within the Catholic Church and found that 50% of church-sponsored projects terminate once external aid ceases, a problem attributed to ineffective monitoring and evaluation practices. Many FBOs lack proficient professionals specialized in Monitoring and Evaluation who can effectively implement monitoring and evaluation systems and develop suitable tools (Roberts, 2010). Most projects funded by FBOs take a longer time to be completed. Others are not able to achieve their intended goals (Roberts, 2010). To enhance the quality of M&E practices among FBO staff, it is essential to provide them with educational resources, such as handbooks, focused on monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, the creation of a national professional association for evaluators can have a substantial impact on nurturing technical expertise among M&E specialists (Jaszczolt & Potkanski, 2010).

However, there remains a dearth of comprehensive data concerning the specific impact of key M&E activities, such as M&E planning, training, baseline surveys, and information systems, on organizational performance, both individually and collectively. As a result, the influence of Monitoring and Evaluation on organizational performance is not adequately established, causing organizations to perceive M&E as an additional burden with limited or unnoticeable advantages.

In Africa, a considerable number of organizations tend to view Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) primarily as a donor mandate rather than as a valuable management tool. This perception hinders the utilization of M&E for assessing progress, identifying issues, and implementing corrective measures during the planning and execution stages of organizational initiatives (Shapiro, 2001; Alcock, 2009; Armstrong & Baron, 2013; Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Nonetheless, funders have a legitimate interest in ensuring the appropriate utilization of their resources. As a result of the prevailing perception of M&E as primarily a donor requirement, numerous present-day faith-based organizations tend to undertake projects in response to demands and pressures from funding agencies, rather than actively contributing to project performance and outcomes (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Some scholars are of the view that organizations fail to employ Monitoring and Evaluation systems because they do not understand the effects of E & M on project performance (Khan, 2001; Kusek & Rist, 2004). Berger (2003, p. 3) establishes that “an understanding of FBOs’ operations and influence has been limited by the lack of documentary data and available literature about these organizations.” Johnson, Tompkins, and Webb (2008, p. 21) discuss the necessity for the academic community to exercise restraint when creating metrics that accurately indicate how much faith is incorporated into programs as a foundational feature.

The failure rates of church-initiated projects in numerous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have reached alarming levels, giving rise to considerable concern. The inability of many church development initiatives in Africa to materialize highlights the need for a comprehensive exploration of the underlying issues at hand (Burchardt & Swidler, 2020). To address this problem effectively, it is crucial to examine the factors that contribute to the challenges in monitoring and evaluation, as they play a pivotal role in project performance.

Notably, Nyamazana (2019) identifies key factors that have been detrimental to monitoring and evaluation processes in the context of church-funded projects. These factors include insufficient institutional ownership and support, limited organizational understanding of the purpose and importance of monitoring and evaluation, the collection of unnecessary and irrelevant data, the absence of a well-defined knowledge management strategy, inadequate technical capacity and skills among human resources, poorly designed results frameworks and organizational goals, and the influence of organizational culture on monitoring and evaluation practices.

To address this issue, the study focused on investigating the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems on the performance of projects funded by Freshfire Church International, a faith-based organization based in Ghana.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary research objective of this study is to assess the influence of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects financed by faith-based organizations, specifically within the context of FreshFire Church International in Ghana.

## Research Objectives

The following were the precise research objectives:

1. To examine the Monitoring and Evaluation planning processes involved in the design and implementation of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.
2. To assess the impact of Stakeholder competency in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.
3. To analyse the impact of the application of Monitoring and Evaluation results on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

## Research Questions

The study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the Monitoring and Evaluation processes involved in the design and implementation of projects funded by FreshFire Church International?
2. What is the impact of Stakeholder competency in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International?
3. What is the impact of the application of Monitoring and Evaluation results on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International?

## Significance of the Study

Examining the impact of M&E systems on performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations has significant implications for both practice and policy. The examination will provide insights into the nature of monitoring and evaluation systems used by faith-based organizations and their impact on project performance. This information can be used to improve the effectiveness of development interventions in faith-based organizations. Again, the study will identify the challenges and

opportunities associated with implementing monitoring and evaluation systems in faith-based organizations, using Freshfire Church International, Ghana as a case study. This information can inform capacity building efforts in this area. To another extent, this project will make a valuable contribution to the extensive literature on project management and performance evaluation, offering unique insights into the significance of monitoring and evaluation systems in these overarching processes.

Moreover, the research will provide a significant contribution to the expanding literature on the intersection of religion and development, which has gained considerable attention in recent times. The study's outcomes will yield valuable insights into the involvement of faith-based organizations in development initiatives, particularly concerning monitoring and evaluation systems. This information can be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of development interventions implemented by faith-based organizations, which play a pivotal role in various parts of the world. Still, the study's conclusions will shed light on the efficacy of project performance monitoring and assessment systems, providing guidance for the design and implementation of future development interventions.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to examining the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems within the context of Faith-Based Organizations, specifically Freshfire Church International (FFCI). The study aims to assess the level of integration of M&E systems into project management procedures and evaluate their performance in relation to overall project outcomes. While acknowledging that other factors can potentially influence project performance, the researcher's focus is primarily on M&E planning, stakeholder competency, M&E data collection and analysis, and the application of M&E results. These variables align with the researcher's interests and will also facilitate

an exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of project managers and other stakeholders towards monitoring and evaluation, as well as the organization's capacity to implement these systems. To supply the necessary information, members of the committee from various kinds of programs supported by the religious group were chosen.

### **Limitation of the Study**

The use of surveys as a data collection method raises the possibility of response bias, which could reduce the validity of the results. Respondents may be reluctant to give honest answers out of concern for upsetting the faith-based organization or its management. Additionally, some respondents may not take the time to carefully read and understand the questions, resulting in inaccurate or incomplete responses. The challenges may minimize the results' validity. However, the study will guarantee anonymity and confidentiality, clearly communicate the significance of the study to respondents, and provide clear instructions for completing the survey. The research will also conduct follow-up interviews to clarify any unclear or incomplete answers and ensure that the information gathered is as precise and trustworthy as practicable.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Monitoring** involves tracking progress and collecting information in real-time to identify areas for improvement.

**Evaluation**, nonetheless is a systematic process and unbiased investigation of the overall efficacy, efficiency, and impact of a project in realizing its goals (EvalCommunity, 2023).

**Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)** may be summed up as two interconnected procedures used to evaluate the advancement and success of a development activity, decision, or program.

**Project** is an intervention that is strategically designed to accomplish specific objectives within allocated resources and specified implementation schedules. Typically, projects are executed within the context of a broader program framework.

**Project monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** system encompasses a wide range of activities conducted throughout or following a project, which involves the definition, selection, collection, analysis, and utilization of information. It functions as a central hub where multiple components converge, beginning with the identification of objectives and indicators and culminating in the final project evaluation. In relatively straightforward, time-bound projects, M&E systems typically comprise several common elements.

**Impact** is the final outcome that is wanted or the major goal that a project seeks to accomplish.. It represents the intended contribution of the project towards a specific outcome, rather than claiming to achieve it solely on its own. For instance, a project may aim to contribute to the impact of "reducing the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)" by providing the outcome of "increasing the rate of institutional delivery" (Kultar et al., 2017). In this example, the project's ultimate goal is to contribute to the reduction of MMR by promoting an increase in the rate of institutional deliveries.

**Theory of Change (ToC)** is a framework that outlines the underlying explanation of the reasons and procedures a particular initiative or intervention performs. It goes beyond simply assessing the effectiveness of an organization and instead aims to explain the methods and mechanisms through which effectiveness is

achieved (Cox, 2009). In essence, the ToC provides a coherent model that illustrates how an organization is intended to operate and bring about desired outcomes. It helps to identify and map the causal pathways, assumptions, and expected changes that contribute to the organization's overall impact.

**Data** refers to explicit quantitative and subjective data or realities that are gathered, coordinated, and broke down for different purposes.

A **stakeholder** refers an individual, group, or other entity if they have a significant role in a program's objectives, execution, and/or assessment.

**Project performance** refers to the extent to which an intervention or organization adheres to predetermined criteria, standards, guidelines, or plans. It encompasses the evaluation of whether the project is functioning effectively and efficiently and whether it is achieving the desired results in line with its stated goals and objectives.

### **Organization of the Study**

The research is structured into five main chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study, including the context, problem statement, research priorities, research questions, and the significance of the research. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review, where theoretical and conceptual constructs related to performance appraisal systems are discussed. This chapter explores topics such as the principles of performance appraisal systems, assessing the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems, and the challenges associated with implementing these systems. Chapter 3 is dedicated to discussing the research methodology. It covers details about the study population, sample selection, sampling methods, research instruments, data collection processes, ethical considerations, and data analysis techniques. The fourth chapter

presents the findings and discussion of the research. The chapter is organized based on the research goals and presents an overview of the study's findings, followed by an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the results. The last chapter concludes the research by providing an overview of the entire study. It includes a summary of the findings, implications of the research, and recommendations based on the study's outcomes.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive exploration of the theoretical, philosophical, and analytical aspects related to the influence of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems on project performance within Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). It delves into various key areas including M&E planning, the competency of stakeholders in M&E, and the practical implementation of M&E frameworks. Additionally, it examines the significance of M&E in enhancing project performance, addresses the challenges associated with M&E, and highlights the pivotal role played by M&E systems in project outcomes. Furthermore, this chapter offers a conceptual framework specifically tailored for assessing effectiveness of M&E systems on the of expansion interventions undertaken by FreshFire Church International (FFCI) in Ghana. The aim is to enhance the overall efficacy of projects implemented within faith-based organizations, such as FFCI. By thoroughly examining these aspects, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding the context of FBOs and the link between M&E systems and project performance.

#### Theoretical Review

This study was guided by the Theory of Change (ToC), Results-Based Management Theory, Realistic Evaluation Theory and Program Theory.

#### Theory of Change

The discipline of theory-driven assessment, which rose to prominence in the 1990s, is where the idea of a Theory of Change has its historical roots (Chen, 1990; Coryn, Noakes, Westine, & Schröter, 2011). According to Reinholz and Andrews (2020), the term "Theory of Change" was promoted by Weiss, through the influential

work of the Aspen Institute and the Roundtable on Community Change. In essence, a Theory of Change is a project-specific methodology that tries to make the underlying assumptions of a change project clear. It makes use of the project's objectives as a compass for project planning, execution, and assessment (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). By employing a Theory of Change, practitioners and stakeholders can clarify their assumptions, articulate the logic behind their interventions, and align their efforts towards achieving the intended project outcomes.

Brest (2010) defines the Theory of Change as a methodology that finds application in planning, participation, adaptive management, and evaluation across various organizations and initiatives. The Theory of Change specifically serves as a unique tool for fostering social change within the philanthropic, not-for-profit, and government sectors. It provides a foundation for measurement, experimentation, and learning, allowing teams to test assumptions, clarify complex pathways to change, and enhance strategies to optimize outcomes (the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2022). The Theory of Change acts as a bridge, addressing the "missing middle" between program activities or interventions and the achievement of desired goals. It maps out and fills in this gap by offering a thorough explanation and visual representation outlining the methods and causes of a desired transformation anticipated to occur within a specific setting. Such methodology starts after determining the long-term objectives then works backward and list each and every necessary criteria (results) that must exist, along with the causal relationships among them, for the goals to be realized (Theory of Change Community, 2021). By employing the Theory of Change, organizations can gain a deeper understanding of the processes and factors that contribute to achieving their desired outcomes.

A monitoring and assessment strategy may be created using a theory of change as guidance. Creating a change theory is often done at the planning phase, but it may also help with monitoring and evaluation (Uitto, 2010). Improved vital inspection and a solid theory of change may help with questions, important indicators for monitoring, gaps in the data presently available, prioritizing further data collection, and a framework for data analysis and reporting. In order to make sure that objectives are completed and goals are realized, monitoring is a crucial component of the theory of change process (EvalCommunity, 20223). Gooding et al. (2018), reveal that using a theory of change approach to design monitoring and evaluation frameworks can help to ensure that the evaluation is focused on relevant outcomes. In many organizations and programs, a theory of change approach to planning and assessment is becoming increasingly important (INTRAC, 2018). It is on the above premises that Admin (2021) suggested that theory of change in research, monitoring, and evaluation is important as it helps to understand the impact of planning, implementation, and impact. These attributes of theory of change are important theoretical paradigms that can help organizations to develop a more comprehensive and effective approach to evaluating their programs and initiatives.

### **Results-Based Management Theory**

As per the description provided by the Investment Learning Platform, Results-based management (RBM) refers to the strategic direction and allocation of resources with the objective of attaining well-defined and verifiable outcomes. RBM Theory is results oriented. RBM is a management approach focused on achieving clearly defined and demonstrable results (Lainjo 2019). RBM's fundamental ideas include setting reasonable expectations, progress monitoring, combining management decisions with lessons learned, and performance reporting. This method assists businesses in aligning

programming, monitoring, and evaluation with outcomes, while also leveraging results data for learning and decision-making. According to the perspective put forth by Crawford and Bryce (2011), it is contended that every stakeholder involved, whether directly or indirectly, in facilitating the realization of predetermined development outcomes, must ensure that their activities, deliverables, and overall contributions actively offer a difference in the achievement of enduring effects. This theoretical framework not only outlines the desired end results but also emphasizes the need for continuous monitoring, self-evaluation of progress towards sustainable outcomes, and the documentation of performance, as highlighted by the UNDP (2012).

### **Realistic Evaluation Theory**

Ray Pawson and Nicholas Tilley created the Realistic Evaluation Theory (RET) in 1997. According to Tilley & Pawson (2000), RET is an approach to program evaluation that emphasizes the importance of context for program outcomes. The theory's fundamental premise are the product of processes that are activated in certain settings, and it seeks to provide the response, "What works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how?" (Yusuf, 2020). Tilley (2004) presents a comprehensive theory that focuses on delineating the outcomes generated by program interventions, the production process, and the unique aspects of dynamic contexts in which these interventions are implemented. This theory-driven evaluation approach serves as a valuable tool in assessing social programs. Realistic Evaluation is grounded in scientific realism and aims to provide a more valid and useful understanding of program effectiveness by focusing on the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that influence outcomes. The core principles and outcomes of this theory throw more light on the study as M&E Planning, Stakeholder Competency in M&E, data

gathering, and M&E analysis, and application of M & E results were investigated in order to determine how they affected the success of the initiatives.

### **Program Theory**

Program theory, also known as logic or theory of change, is an approach used to explain what a program is anticipated to do and why work attain its intended results (Program Creation & Mapping—Articulating Program Theory, 2022). This theory has been referred to in the literature under a number of different names, including program theory (Bickman, 1990), program logic (Funnell, 1997), theory-based evaluation or theory of change (Weiss, 1995, 1998), theory-driven evaluation (Chen, 1997), theory-of-action (Lainjo, 2019), intervention logic (Nagarajan and Vanheukelen, 1997), impact pathway analysis (Douthwaite et al., 2004). Program theory holds significant importance because, in the absence of evidence supporting the effectiveness of our actions, we risk implementing initiatives that are either inefficient or unproductive (Roberts, 2021). Program theory makes explicit the connection between the program activities and the outcomes that are expected to be achieved. More so, Uitto (2010) explains that Program theory is an evidence-based way of articulating the chain of outcomes that a program is intended to contribute to. Sedani and Sechrest (1999) define a Program Theory as a collection of sentences that explain a certain system, elucidate the reasons, methods, and contextual circumstances under which program effects occur, forecast the program outcomes, and delineate the necessary prerequisites for achieving the intended program effects. Program Theory is primarily concerned with understanding how to facilitate change and identifying the individuals or entities responsible for driving that change. It represents an expansive framework that incorporates elements of the logic model and employs the logical framework methodology. Program Theory is positioned in a larger framework that includes

operational assessment and theory of change. Advocates of Program Theory have long explored the integration of program theories into the evaluation process. The basic purpose of a program theory, according to many academics, is to create the theoretical justification for the program (Chen, 1990; Lipsey, 2000; Reynolds, 1998; Rogers et al., 2000; Rogers, 2000; Sedani & Sechrest, 1999; Stufflebeam, 2000; Weiss, 1997). Over the years, this has proven to be an instrumental tool in monitoring and evaluation, renowned for its capacity to effectively address issues and conduct assessments that complement the findings. Sethi and Philippines (2012) assert that Program Theory equips evaluators with the necessary tools to effectively manage influential aspects of the evaluation process.

Rossi (2012) asserts that this theory encompasses an organizing strategy detailing the deployment of funds as well as system events organized to guarantee the establishment and sustained functioning of the planned service system. Uitto (2010) highlights the value of Program Theory in Monitoring and Evaluation as it enables the attribution of project outcomes to specific projects or activities and facilitates the identification of both expected and unintended program outcomes. Program Theory serves as a conceptual framework for developing an integrated Monitoring and Evaluation framework, guiding these two crucial project functions. According to Rogers et al. (2011), Program Theory also aids in consolidating accessible data that explains and promotes an initiative in what way the activity is intended to function. Or otherwise, therefore closing the gap and achieving ideal performance. Thus, the combination of these four theories underscores the importance of strategic planning and implementation of monitoring and evaluation plans, ensuring the achievement of desired outcomes and the ongoing development of projects.

Theories are inherently shaped by the cultural values and belief systems of the time they emerge. They serve a crucial role in guiding our understanding and interpretation of the world around us. When conducting research and gathering information, it is essential for the investigator to have a clear understanding of what information is relevant and important to collect. Valid theories are validated through research and provide a solid foundation for practical application (Costley, 2006). In the realm of research, theories lend structure, depth, and richness to the subject matter being examined, adding beauty and intellectual depth to the study.

Abend (2008) identified that theories are formulated to explain, predict, and comprehend phenomena. They often challenge and extend existing knowledge within certain conceptual boundaries. The theoretical framework serves as the structure that supports and encompasses the theory in a research study. It introduces and describes the theory that elucidates the existence of the research problem under investigation. In light of this, the theories discussed in this study hold significant relevance to the examination of monitoring and evaluation within faith-based organizations.

The Theory of Change holds particular relevance to this study as it provides a framework for understanding how projects bring about change and achieve their intended outcomes. By clearly articulating the underlying assumptions and desired outcomes of a project, the Theory of Change guides project planning, implementation, and evaluation. Understanding the Theory of Change in the context of projects funded by faith-based organizations sheds light on the specific mechanisms through which these organizations aim to effect positive change, and how monitoring and evaluation systems contribute to this process (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020).

Similarly, the Results-Based Management (RBM) theory directly applies to this study by emphasizing the importance of achieving well-defined and measurable results. RBM focuses on setting realistic expectations, monitoring progress, incorporating lessons learned, and reporting performance. Crawford and Bryce (2011) suggest that an examination of how monitoring and evaluation systems aligned with RBM principles contribute to project performance and the achievement of intended outcomes in projects funded by faith-based organizations is crucial.

Realistic Evaluation Theory (RET) is highly relevant as it underscores the significance of considering contextual factors that influence program outcomes. RET emphasizes the understanding of "what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how." This lens enables the evaluation of the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems in projects funded by faith-based organizations, taking into account the contextual factors that shape system effectiveness. It also provides insights into how these systems can be tailored to different settings to optimize project performance.

Program Theory, also known as logic or theory of change, directly pertains to this study as it elucidates how and why a program is anticipated to function and achieve its desired outcomes. By explicitly delineating the sequence of outcomes that a program aims to contribute to, Program Theory facilitates comprehension of the links between program activities, monitoring and evaluation systems, and project performance. Analyzing the program theories that underpin projects funded by faith-based organizations allows for an assessment of how well-designed monitoring and evaluation systems align with program theories and contribute to the attainment of desired outcomes (Roberts, 2021).

## Monitoring and Evaluation Planning and Systems

According to Tengan and Aigbavboa (2017), the process of monitoring and evaluation begins with the design and establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system, which is then implemented and utilized throughout various project activities. Developing a monitoring and evaluation system is a crucial initial step in the project initiation and planning process. Onyango (2019) argues that monitoring and evaluation systems serve as essential components of a performance-oriented policy cycle, where policy goals are formulated based on public interest, and policies are designed and implemented in ways that maximize their effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency. Monitoring is defined as the concurrent process of tracking the implementation of project activities and achieving the planned outputs. It provides real-time information on the project's progress in terms of completing activities and attaining immediate outputs, both in terms of quality and targets (Kultar et al., 2017). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2006) defines monitoring as a continuous function that systematically collects data on specified indicators to provide management and key stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with insights into the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, as well as the utilization of allocated funds. Monitoring results, as outlined by Kultar et al. (2017), serves several purposes: it improves strategies and targeting by enabling decision-makers to focus project resources on areas where they can yield maximum output; it helps identify implementation barriers or challenges in real-time, allowing for necessary adjustments; and it ensures that the project is more effective and outcome-oriented. Monitoring is descriptive in nature, providing information on an organization's progress relative to targets and outcomes at any given time (Nyonje, Ndunge, & Mulwa, 2012).

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plays a critical role in the management of organizations by facilitating a reflective and communicative system that supports the implementation of organizational strategies (Nuguti, 2009). The process of monitoring provides valuable information regarding the current status of a policy, program, or project at any given point in time, as well as its progress over an extended period, in order to assess its alignment with predefined targets and desired outcomes. This aspect of M&E focuses primarily on describing the situation. On the other hand, evaluation offers substantial evidence to understand the underlying reasons behind the achievement or non-achievement of targets and outcomes. By exploring causality, evaluation provides a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the success or failure of the initiatives.

Evaluation, as defined by the OECD (2006), encompasses the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, which includes evaluating its design, implementation, and outcomes. It serves as a methodical and unbiased examination of an organization, providing evidence to understand the reasons behind the achievement or non-achievement of targets and outcomes. Evaluation seeks to delve into issues of causality, aiming to uncover the factors that contribute to success or failure (Ogula, 2002). While monitoring facilitates adjustments during the project's progression towards desired outcomes, evaluation plays a crucial role in analyzing deviations from the envisioned objectives and goals (Kultar et al., 2017). Monitoring helps identify any deviations from the project plan and allows for mid-course corrections, while evaluation systematically assesses the impact, effectiveness, and overall contribution of the project (Kultar et al., 2017). Program evaluation involves the systematic collection of data to inform decision-making by stakeholders, taking into account the intrinsic and extrinsic value of the evaluand,

competing resources, and the political or organizational contexts in which it operates (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

By monitoring, we see what we are doing but by evaluation, we assess what we have done. Monitoring answers the question: ‘What is going on?’ Evaluation answers the question: ‘What happened?’ Monitoring and assessment work best when they are combined. Monitoring provides information on how a policy, program, or project is doing with respect to its specific objectives and goals at any given time. Evaluation provides proof as to why goals and results have (or have not) been attained.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) serves as a robust tool in public management, enabling governments and organizations to enhance their achievement of results (Görgens & Kusek, 2009). Scholars highlight that M&E itself encompasses four essential activities, namely M&E Planning, M&E Training, Baseline surveys, and Information systems (Maddock, 2009; Ogula, 2002; Roza, 2013). The overarching objective of monitoring and evaluation is to measure and assess performance, thereby enabling more effective management of development outcomes and outputs. Performance, in this context, refers to the progress made towards and the achievement of results (Malik, 2002). The process of conducting M&E plays a critical role at every stage of the project life cycle, ranging from initiation to closure (Kamau, 2017). According to Malik (2002), the absence of monitoring and evaluation would hinder the ability to determine whether the work is progressing in the right direction, claim progress and success, and identify areas for improvement in future efforts.

**Table 1: Complementarity between Monitoring and Evaluation**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	Continuous, Systematic	Recurring
<b>Main action</b>	Keeping Tabs / Observing	Review
<b>Basic purpose</b>	Boost Efficiency; Modify Concentrate Strategize	Enhance efficiency, effect, and future planning
<b>Focus</b>	Work Plans, Process Outcomes, Contributions, and Results	Relevance, cost- effectiveness, effects, as well as efficacy
<b>Information sources</b>	Field observation, normal or sentinel systems, progress reports, and swift assessments	similar, including studies and surveys
<b>Undertaken by</b>	Program Directors Community (Beneficiaries) Workers Community Directors and Donors	Program Directors, Supervising Officials, Funders, External Evaluators, and Consumers
<b>Reporting to</b>	Program Administrators Community (Beneficiaries) Employees Society Directors and Investors	Community of Beneficiaries Programme Managers, Supervisors, Funders, Policy-Makers

Source: UNICEF (2022). Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation. Making a Difference?

**Table 2: Monitoring vs Evaluation**

	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Simultaneous analysis of project advancement towards the intended outcomes, aimed at enhancing managerial decision-making (Shihemi, 2016).	Assessment of the extent of change in the project's proposed outcomes that can be attributed to the project itself.
<b>Timing</b>	Systematic and regular activities conducted throughout the project implementation.	Specific points in time, such as the project's midpoint, phase transitions, and project completion.
<b>Scope</b>	Focuses on activities, outputs, and indicators of progress and change.	Focuses on the delivery of project outcomes and impacts, evaluating progress towards project objectives and goals.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Ideally an internal endeavor, carried out by project staff or target beneficiaries.	Ideally an external undertaking to avoid conflicts of interest, conducted by external evaluators in collaboration with donors, project staff, and project users.
<b>Purpose</b>	Reporting project progress to management, identifying bottlenecks, implementing corrective measures, and adapting project implementation plans.	Ensuring project accountability, extracting valuable insights, and providing recommendations for similar projects. It showcases the project's potential and achievements.

Source: Kultar et al. (2017). A Practitioners' Manual on Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Projects. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

**Table 3: Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation**

	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Reason</b>	Done to verify that project operations are carried out in accordance with the established schedule	Conducted to assess the achievement of project objectives.
<b>Category of indicator</b>	Focuses on quantifiable and easily measurable outputs	Concentration; qualitative goals
<b>Use of Results</b>	Used to change plans and improve execution quality.	The findings are used to evaluate impact and update goals

Source: Kusek & Rist (2010).

### **Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation and Program Performance**

Stakeholders are people or groups that might potentially be impacted by or identify themselves as participants in program activities, outcomes, or decisions (PMI, 2013). Competency plays a significant role in influencing performance (Chauveron, 2021). The ability of stakeholders to carry out evaluation and monitoring operations is greatly improved by M&E training. Numerous studies besides surveys indicate that lack of capacity and skills is a contributing factor to failures experienced in community-led projects. Long-term involvement and training are integral in ensuring competency. According to Waithera and Wanyoike (2015), training plays a vital role in shaping how Monitoring and Evaluation is conducted by providing guidelines, procedures, and tools essential for the Monitoring and Evaluation processes. Several researchers have concluded that competency enhances project performance (Shihemi, 2016; Pandey, 2005; Tshitangoni, 2010). Both formal and informal training and development in Monitoring and Evaluation are crucial for conducting objective assessments of

programs because training involves altering one's mindset, learning new things, and having the ability to look into a community's needs.

Some studies have enumerated methods for evaluating stakeholder competency in a program. According to Chauveron (2021) group activities, collaboration work, and coaching sessions can help to increase stakeholder identification and inclusion. In their study, Okul & Nyonje (2020) found a noteworthy correlation between the utilization of evaluation results and stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process. Building upon this, Sauter et al. (2020) developed a semi-standardized monitoring tool that can be employed in diverse settings to assess capacity building among stakeholder groups. Besides, Hall et al. (2020) employed a case-study methodology to investigate the practical implementation of a program, utilizing stakeholder focus groups and interviews to evaluate the fidelity of implementation and early outcomes. All of these researchers revealed that practical techniques for assessing stakeholder competency in a program include stakeholder identification and inclusion, stakeholder participation in evaluations, monitoring tools, and stakeholder focus groups and interviews.

### **Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Planning**

The above planning plays vital role in systematically tracking and assessing the outcomes of program interventions over its entire duration (The Compass for SBC, 2022). This dynamic process should be regularly referred to and reorganized. Whereas the specific M&E plan may differ each activity should include all fundamental structure and incorporate essential components. M&E planning is of utmost importance in monitoring and evaluating the results of interventions throughout program implementation. According to Bullen and Bullen (2022), it is crucial to develop an M&E strategy prior to commencing any monitoring activities. This strategy ensures a well-defined approach to address program inquiries and guides decisions on data

collection methods, analysis of monitoring data, and the dissemination of outcomes to donors and program staff for the purpose of program enhancement. It is crucial to bear in mind that M&E data alone lacks utility unless it is effectively utilized. An M&E strategy assists in ensuring the effective utilization of data, maximizing program success, and facilitating the reporting of outcomes upon program completion.

To ensure the successful implementation of M&E planning, it is important to follow a systematic set of steps. According to Bullen and Bullen (2022), starting move in forming M&E idea is identifying the purpose and goal of the program. The program's objectives are probably already known if it has a logic model or theory of change. Otherwise, the M&E strategy provides an opportunity to establish them. Defining program goals involves addressing three key interrogations: What issue is this program trying to address? What measures are being made to address the issue? How can program personnel determine if the program was effective in resolving the issue? By responding to these, the expected outcomes of the program and the criteria for success can be identified. The development of intermediate results and goals is equally significant within monitoring progress towards the general purpose. Additional guidance on finding these goals is covered in the logic model guide (The Compass for SBC, 2022). According to Asaadmin (2022), program indicators should cover a range of measures that evaluate both the processes and outcomes of a program. Once the program's goals and objectives have been established, the subsequent step involves defining indicators that facilitate the tracking of progress towards achieving those objectives. This includes defining process indicators that monitor the implementation of program activities. Process indicators serve the purpose of answering the question, "Are the activities being carried out as intended?" For instance, a concrete example of a process indicator could be the number of sanitation provider trainings conducted

within the monitoring and evaluation systems for projects supported by FreshFire Church International in Ghana. In relation to the performance evaluation of projects funded by FreshFire Church International in Ghana, it is important to determine the quantity of campaign initiatives carried out in appealing to young people settings with a focus on sanitation. This information serves as an indicator of program performance. Additionally, the distribution of sanitation materials at these youth-friendly locations can also be used as a performance indicator for the projects funded by FreshFire Church International in Ghana. Assessing the percentage of youth reached with sanitation messages through the media is another key aspect of the impact assessment within the monitoring and evaluation systems for these projects. By referring to Muriithi (2020), it is evident that outcome indicators are crucial for tracking the level of success achieved by program activities in relation to program objectives. These indicators help answer the question, "Have the program activities made a difference?" For instance, one example of an outcome indicator could be the percentage of youth who have benefited from programs implemented by FreshFire Church International. To effectively monitor program effectiveness, it is essential to develop valid progress indicators, as highlighted by Seasons (2003). These indicators may include tracking the number and percentage of successful outreach programs conducted and determining the number and percentage of youth who have actually benefited from the sanitation project carried out by FreshFire Church International in Ghana.

The subsequent step in M&E planning involves defining the data collection methods and timeline. Once monitoring indicators have been established, it is necessary to determine the approaches for collecting data and the frequency at which data will be recorded to track the indicators. This decision-making process should involve discussions among program staff, stakeholders, and donors. The chosen data collection

methods will significantly impact how data is gathered and reported. The selection of data sources depends largely on the specific aspects that each indicator aims to measure. It is likely that the program will require multiple data sources to address all the relevant programming questions. Subsequently, identifying roles and responsibilities within the M&E framework is crucial. The M&E plan should include a section dedicated to defining the roles and responsibilities of individuals involved. It is important to establish, from the early planning stages, who will be accountable for collecting data for each indicator. This responsibility may be shared among M&E staff, research staff, and program staff. Collaboration among team members is essential to ensure accurate and timely data collection. Clear roles in data management should be determined with input from all team members to ensure everyone is aligned and aware of their assigned indicators. This approach facilitates smooth reporting processes, minimizing unexpected surprises. (The Compass for SBC, 2022). Creating an analysis plan and reporting templates as well as planning for dissemination and donor reporting are the final steps in M&E planning application. After the completion of data collection, it is necessary for someone, such as an in-house M&E manager or research assistant, to compile and analyze the collected data. The purpose of this analysis is to populate a results table that will undergo internal review and be used for external reporting. The designated individual or team plans the dissemination of data, deciding how it will be shared and with whom. It is important to note that the ultimate goal of M&E efforts should not be solely focused on collecting data for its own sake. Data collection should always serve specific purposes and objectives, aligning with the overall goals of the program. These theoretical foundations perform a vital role in influencing the activities of faith-based organizations, enabling them to effectively meet the overarching objectives and goals of their beneficiaries (Rogers, 2000). Organizations can develop

creating blended platforms that serve as faith-based social entrepreneurship enterprises and oversee a triple bottom line of charitable work, economic effect, and spiritual mission by combining these theoretical grounds (Beech, 2018). Osberg (2015) intimated that this approach allows faith-based organizations to create sustainable financial models, reduce their dependence on donors, and permanently shift the social and economic equilibrium for their beneficiaries. Contextually, by incorporating these theories, faith-based organizations can better align their formal and informal structures with their core functions, ensuring a more efficient and impactful operation (Sharma, 2003).

### **Biblical Foundation of Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

Genesis 1:31 *And when God looked at all he had created, he realized that it was excellent. And the sixth day was in the evening and the morning.* [1611 King James Version]. It is theologically and biblically vital for FBOs and Churches to monitor and evaluate their programs per the exact readings from (Luke 13:6-9, II Corinthians 13:5). The Bible affirms that God Himself is involved in Monitoring and Evaluation considering the King James Version of (Genesis chapters 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). After working for six days, God considered what He had done and saw everything He had made. This was clearly an evaluation of His handiwork. If the Almighty Himself engaged in evaluation of work, then His children must do same. After sin came into the world, God conducted Monitoring and Evaluation and declared, “for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Genesis 6:12, 1611 King James Version). God is performance-conscious. There are several biblical references that highlight the importance of commitment to a high level and quality of performance (Matthew 25:21, Mark 7:37, Colossians 3:23). For instance, the talents' narrative (Matthew 25:14-30) and the parable of the King's verdict of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46) can be

interpreted as emphasizing the significance of monitoring and evaluating project performance. In the book of Revelations, Christ Jesus is seen evaluating the seven churches (Revelation 2-3). Jesus gave commendations and recommendations. He spelt out what the churches are doing well and what needed to improve (Revelation 2:3-4, 13-14, 19-20). He gave the churches a set of actions to address their deficiencies (Revelation 2:5, 25; 3:3, 18). Luke 10:1-24 states that after dispatching His disciples on an evangelistic trip, Jesus Christ called them for an evaluation. Same Luke 10:17-21 points to the evaluative process and feedback. Monitoring and Evaluation are necessary for the ongoing development and innovation of faith-based programs. In fact, the concepts of M&E are heavily evident in the exact readings from the book of Proverbs chapters (1:5; 11:14; 12:15; 14:8, 15; 15:14, 22; 19:20; 24:3-6).

Source for all bible quotation and verses: [1611 King James Version]

### **Faith-Based Organizations and Development**

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have become significant players in a variety of fields, including poverty alleviation, public health, and social services, according to Syed et al., (2023). Their particular qualities, such as their capacity to develop trust, customize public health campaigns, alleviate hurdles, and distribute and maintain initiatives, may be ascribed to their positions and significance.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) encompass a range of self-identified religious groups or institutions from various traditions, including but not restricted to those who identify as Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu (Dionne & Chen, 2000). These establishments are typically associated with a religious community and can be found in different locations and social sectors worldwide (Clarke & Ware, 2015). As Berger (2003) puts it, faith-based development groups are formal entities that derive

their identity and mission from one or more religious or spiritual systems' teachings. They work on a volunteer, autonomous, philanthropic basis with the aim of promoting and realizing beliefs about the public good that are expressed collectively at the national or worldwide level. FBOs hold significant strategic importance in delivering community services. UNFPA (2014) suggests that faith serves as a platform where justice, peace, and the fight against inequality intersect. While FBOs primarily prioritize the spiritual well-being of their community, they often engage in projects that address the physical, material, and mental well-being of both their community members and individuals outside their community (Gomes, 2021). FBOs encompass a range of self-identified religious groups or institutions from various traditions, including but not limited to Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu groups (Dionne & Chen, 2000). These organizations are typically associated with a religious community and can be found in different locations and social sectors worldwide (Clarke & Ware, 2015). According to Berger (2003), faith-based development organizations are formal entities that derive their identity and mission from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions. They operate on a nonprofit, independent, voluntary basis with the aim of promoting and realizing collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level. FBOs hold significant strategic importance in delivering community services. UNFPA (2014) suggests that faith serves as a platform where justice, peace, and the fight against inequality intersect. While FBOs primarily prioritize the spiritual well-being of their community, they often engage in projects that address the physical, material, and mental well-being of both their community members and individuals outside their community (Gomes, 2021). FBOs are into developmental projects. Kagema (2015) highlights that the inclusion of religious beliefs and practices is essential for societal development. De Temple (2012) defines development as

actions, practices, and ideas that challenge institutional powers constructively and promote justice and righteousness. This includes providing resources to marginalized groups in a sustainable manner. Resource providers can include government institutions, non-governmental organizations, charities, philanthropic individuals, faith-based organizations, and businesses (West et al., 2014). Faith-based organizations have a strong presence in many development circles and extensively operate in communities, providing social services, healthcare, education, and acting as community organizers (Marshall & Keough, 2004). Belshaw et al. (2000) argue that development focuses on people's lives and communities and cannot be solely categorized through measurements. According to Phillips & Pittman (2014), community development spans various spheres of history, including education, economics, sociology, politics, urban and regional planning, making it one of the most diverse practices in history. Adkins et al. (2010) note that faith-based organizations often serve as primary providers of social services, generating new ideas and delivering development-oriented services in sectors where governments have faced challenges.

According to Haider (2009), the Church in Europe has played a significant role in alleviating socio-economic struggles through its initiatives, providing both spiritual nourishment and practical support. In Ghana, churches enjoy tax-exempt status as they are recognized for their contributions to the fight against poverty. The mission of Christians and the church extends beyond spiritual matters, as they are called to embody integrity and fairness in the world, which has wide-ranging implications for the church's engagement in societal affairs (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2018). Ferris (2005) emphasizes that the majority of Christian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide assistance to individuals regardless of their religious affiliation, demonstrating a commitment to serving all those in need.

On Islam, Lunn (2009) states that “Within Islam, there have been donors of *waqfs* (charitable endowments) for many centuries and these funds have been used to build schools, hospitals and universities.” Atia (2012) acknowledges a movement within Islam that encourages Muslims to proactively engage in activities for the betterment of their communities. This movement promotes the use of "zakat and sadaqa" (Islamic forms of giving) to fund development projects rather than solely relying on charity. Similarly, Buddhism also emphasizes the importance of participating in projects that benefit society and encourages Buddhists to engage in development work guided by Buddhist principles. Raney and Raveloharimisy (2016) argue that religion holds significant importance in the lives of people worldwide, particularly in developing nations. Regarding the impact of faith-based organizations, UNFPA (2014) suggests that faith serves as a domain where justice, peace, and the fight against inequality intersect. FBOs arose in response to the needs of their communities, and their importance has only grown over time. They offer a variety of services such as food banks, shelters, counseling, and education. FBOs are frequently able to reach disenfranchised groups that may lack access to other services, and they may create a feeling of community and belonging to persons who may feel lonely or detached (Crawford & Bryce, 2011). Overall, FBOs have a long history of delivering vital services to their communities, and their relevance and significance are widely acknowledged. As society faces new problems, FBOs will surely play an important role in meeting the needs of their communities, hence the importance to have efficient M&E systems on how well initiatives supported by religious groups perform, specifically FreshFire International Church, Ghana.

## Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation on Project Performance

M&E are essential components of development performance since they assist to analyze project progress, efficiency, and effectiveness (Stemler, 2000). Kumar (2020) points out that M&E practices enable organizations to track their projects' progress, identify improvement areas, and make informed decisions for future planning. Monitoring and evaluation processes are essential for organizations to follow the success of their initiatives, identify areas for development, and make educated decisions for future planning. Implementing an M&E system can assist Freshfire Church International in Ghana in evaluating the efficacy of programs financed by religious institutions. Accordingly, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stipulates that monitoring and evaluation measures progress toward achieving expected results and identify bottlenecks during implementation. M&E systems allow stakeholders to discover concerns and opportunities by assessing progress and revising the implementation plan accordingly. This procedure aids in keeping the project on track and accomplishing its goals (EvalCommunity, 2023). Indeed, as highlighted by Soken-Huberty (2023), M&E planning is vital for promoting transparency and accountability in project implementation. Through monitoring, tracking, analysis, and reporting, organizations can ensure that projects are carried out according to plan and that resources are utilized efficiently. M&E methodologies play a vital role in assessing project performance, measuring outcomes, and ensuring the effective utilization of resources while adhering to the project plan (Yusuf, 2020). By implementing M&E practices, organizations can enhance transparency and accountability by systematically monitoring and reporting on project progress (Soken-Huberty, 2023; Wells et al., 2022). Additionally, M&E techniques enable the measurement of project impact and facilitate the identification of areas for improvement through baseline, mid-term, and end-of-

project impact studies and reports (Soken-Huberty, 2023). Therefore, establishing an M&E system would assist FreshFire Church International in tracking project progress, identifying areas for enhancement, and making informed decisions for future planning, as emphasized by Yusuf (2020). This approach ensures that projects achieve their objectives and have a positive impact on the lives of the underprivileged and vulnerable populations in Ghana.

M&E systems are known for creating areas for improvement and making informed decisions for future planning of activities. As Soken-Huberty (2023) notes, M&E procedures give businesses valuable information that enables them to recognize errors, successes, and elements that can be modified and repeated for subsequent projects. Monitoring and assessment from the past have an impact on decision-making, ensuring the effective use of resources. Developing a good M&E plan is beneficial to an organization as it involves developing methods to collect, distribute, and analyze information, as well as deciding on desired outcomes and how to measure success. M&E assists in making informed judgments regarding the success of projects and the appropriate use of resources by monitoring performance over time. Additionally, M&E systems support learning and knowledge management by capturing lessons learned to manage, apply, and share knowledge within an organization (Amanuel, 2022). Moreover, M&E practices foster continuous improvement by identifying areas for improvement and enhancing project performance, ensuring that faith-based organizations can better serve their communities and achieve their mission (Soken-Huberty, 2023). By improving decision-making, promoting organization, ensuring efficient resource use, supporting learning and knowledge management, and fostering accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, M&E practices significantly contribute to the success of projects funded by FBOs (Wunnava, 2022).

Implementing M&E procedures is central for faith-based organizations to ensure that their projects align with their mission and vision and achieve desired outcomes (Wells et al., 2022). M&E practices enable FBOs to measure the efficacy of their activities and respond accordingly, ensuring that resources are allocated and reallocated in the most effective ways. This is particularly important for Christ-centered organizations, as 78% of them believe that faith integration with activities is crucial (Wells et al., 2022).

In developing countries, M&E systems face multiple obstacles, but they are essential for managing results and overcoming challenges (Kusek and Rist, 2004). Outcomes-based M&E systems assist in responding to stakeholders' increasing demands for outcomes by providing a solution to the "so what" contention. By establishing a clear distinction between outputs, outcomes, and higher-level development goals at the project design stage, FBOs can ensure that their M&E systems effectively influence project strategy during implementation (EvalCommunity, 2023). Furthermore, M&E practices improve accountability, evidence-based decision-making, effectiveness, efficiency, learning, knowledge management, communication, transparency, and sustainability. By providing evidence of progress and results, M&E systems help FBOs demonstrate the impact of their interventions and secure funding for future projects. By implementing M&E systems in close partnership with all relevant stakeholders, FBOs can ensure that project objectives and targets are well-defined and agreed upon, enhancing learning and encouraging innovation, and contributing to the scaling up of projects. To finalize the above, the implementation of M&E systems in faith-based organizations, such as FreshFire Church International in Ghana, is essential for ensuring that projects align with their mission and vision and achieve desired outcomes. By adopting M&E practices, FBOs can improve their effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability, ultimately contributing to the success of

their projects and the well-being of their beneficiaries. In order to successfully handle the issue of assessing project performance and success, M&E approaches must be used. M&E techniques assist in gauging a project's progress and accomplishments by overseeing its proper implementation as planned, resulting in optimal resource utilization (Yusuf, 2020). By monitoring a project's development through M&E during the monitoring phase, organizations enhance transparency and accountability, generating positive results and ensuring optimal resource utilization (Soken-Huberty, 2023; Wells et al., 2022). Systems for monitoring and evaluating progress are essential for assessing the success of any project or program. It helps in spotting potential problems, monitoring development, and evaluating results. Organizations may assess the performance of their activities, identify areas for improvement, and confirm that they are achieving their goals and objectives through monitoring and evaluation.

### **Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems**

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have gained significance as influential contributors in various fields, such as poverty alleviation, public health, and provision of social services (Syed et al., 2023). They play a significant role in providing social services, including healthcare, education, and community development, to millions of people worldwide. However, due to the unique nature of FBOs, monitoring and assessing the performance of these services can be difficult (Ketting-Weller, 1958). It is crucial to recognize that addressing the challenges of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems can significantly impact global communities. This study aims to identify these challenges in order to better address the pressing needs of various communities. By overcoming obstacles in M&E systems, governments and organizations can improve their performance and promote development effectiveness.

Olala (2020) highlights a significant hurdle in the M&E system, which involves the issue of trust deficit in data, ultimately leading to potentially inaccurate outcomes. Setlhako (2013) asserts that the lack of trust in data can stem from multiple factors, including insufficient coordination, limited financial resources, and language-related challenges. For instance, the relationship between donors and FBOs in the Cameroonian health sector has been characterized as being pragmatic, which can lead to tensions between FBOs and the government and contribute to faith controversies (Van Wees & Jennings, 2021).

Wells et al. (2022) opine that in the context of behavioral health, FBOs can play an essential role in providing services to underserved populations. However, it can be difficult to evaluate the efficacy of their programs and distribute resources appropriately if there is a lack of confidence in the data supplied by such organizations. Addressing this challenge requires building trust around common objectives, fostering open communication, and ensuring that partnerships between FBOs, donors, and governments are based on mutual understanding and respect (Rugg, 2010). Lack of technical know-how and resources needed to execute M&E systems successfully is a further obstacle (Roza, 2013). The challenge is particularly apparent in FBOs, which often face unique constraints and challenges. For instance, FBOs may lack the necessary funding to invest in M&E systems, as they often rely on donations and grants to support their operations (Setlhako, 2013). It is important to note that financial constraints can restrict their ability to hire skilled professionals or invest in the necessary technology and infrastructure to implement an effective M&E system. Furthermore, FBOs may have difficulty determining how faith fits into an organization's governance, operations, and impact when attempting to quantify the "faith effect" (Tilley, 2004). Van Wees and Jennings (2021) argue that a substantial

obstacle faced by FBOs is the insufficiency of technical expertise and resources necessary for the successful implementation of M&E systems. This challenge is exacerbated by the unique context in which FBOs operate, including their faith-based mission, complex stakeholder relationships, and financial constraints. To address this challenge, FBOs may need to invest in capacity building, develop context-specific M&E frameworks, and foster partnerships that support their M&E efforts (Shariff, 2011).

The last challenge of M&E planning we will discuss in this study is the lack of cultural attitudes and focus (Biden, 2022). This challenge arises due to the complex nature of FBOs, which often intertwine religious beliefs and practices with their service delivery and governance structures. Tilley, (2004) for instance, mentioned that quantifying the "faith effect" is a significant challenge in evaluating the impact of FBOs on their target populations. This relates to identifying how faith affects a company's leadership, service delivery, and all-around performance. It is challenging to gauge faith's direct influence on the results of FBOs' programs and services since it is an intangible factor. Divergent viewpoints on the function of faith in the medical domain may also make it difficult for donors and FBOs to communicate with one another (Van Wees & Jennings, 2021). In conclusion, cultural attitudes and lack of focus present significant challenges to the M&E systems of FBOs. According to Biden (2022), resolving these challenges requires a greater knowledge of the role of faith in FBO operations, as well as the creation of appropriate assessment methodologies that account for the particular characteristics of these organizations. A comprehensive summary by Stemler, (2000) explains that inadequate training and inadequate competence in M&E might lead to inaccurate information gathering and assessment, endangering the project's success as a whole. The intricacy of survey and surveillance

procedures employed in M&E systems are also a limiting factor to a successful implementation plans of FBOs. Again, feedback mechanisms are also vital for good M&E systems because they allow businesses to learn from their experiences and make required improvements. The policies of donors can significantly influence the operation of M&E systems within faith-based organizations. Donors may have specific M&E criteria that may not align with the organization's objectives or capacity, resulting in potential tension and diminished effectiveness of the M&E system. The implementation of robust M&E systems is vital for evaluating the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations. Failure to establish comprehensive M&E planning systems can impede the evaluation of project outcomes in the context of FBO funding (Biden, 2022).

### **Empirical Literature Review**

A crucial step in the research process is the review of the empirical literature. It offers an in-depth and systematic scrutiny of the body of literature that aligns with the explicit aims of the study (Bell & Waters, 2018). This is distinct from a typical literature review, which provides a more extensive exploration of the existing knowledge within a field (Babbie, 2010). The empirical literature review, however, centres on academic work that has gathered and scrutinized data (either qualitative or quantitative) pertaining to the specific areas under investigation (Ishtiaq, 2019).

Within the confines of this thesis, the empirical literature review will give emphasis to the impact of M&E systems and effectiveness of activities FreshFire Church International, Ghana sponsored (Kusek & Rist, 2004). The empirical evidence compiled will lay a solid groundwork for comprehending the association between M&E systems and project effectiveness, simultaneously illuminating the mediating roles of government policy and stakeholder attitudes (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

This approach holds the potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the correlation between M&E practices and project effectiveness, emphasizing the distinct experiences and outcomes within FreshFire Church International (Patton, 2008). The following sections will present an empirical review of the literature, aligning with each of the study's objectives.

### **Impact of Monitoring and Evaluation Planning on the Performance of Projects**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) planning has received a lot of attention as an essential aspect of project success (Kissi et al., 2019). Monitoring and Evaluation planning serves as a structured approach for assessing project progression, pinpointing potential challenges, and introducing necessary adjustments to improve outcomes (Opulu & Muchai, 2021).

In the sphere of projects sponsored by faith-based entities such as FreshFire Church International, M&E planning plays a vital role in guaranteeing that resources are judiciously utilized and objectives are realized. In their research, Githaiga and Mutundu (2022) found that the implementation of effective M&E planning in infrastructural projects at Dedan Kimathi University, Kenya, resulted in improved project performance. The study recommended incorporating flexibility in M&E processes to enable re-planning and review of M&E tools, thereby enhancing data collection, information dissemination, and overall management.

Bell's (2014) study highlighted the value of stakeholder involvement in M&E planning. The inclusion of stakeholders in the planning process contributes to a more comprehensive grasp of the project context, resulting in more accurate and relevant performance indicators (Yusuf, 2017). However, while the importance of M&E planning is well established, there is a paucity of research focusing specifically on its

impact within the Ghanaian context, particularly concerning projects funded by faith-based organizations like FreshFire Church International. This gap suggests the need for further studies in this area to better understand the local dynamics and unique considerations that may influence the effectiveness of M&E planning in improving project performance (Kathongo et al., 2021).

The importance of M&E planning in boosting project performance is highlighted by the empirical research currently available. However, little is known about the precise impact of M&E planning on projects in Ghana that are sponsored by faith-based groups. Hence, there is a need for more in-depth, context-specific studies to fully comprehend this relationship and to guide the development of more effective M&E planning strategies for such projects.

### **Impact of Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation on the Performance of Projects**

The success of projects is largely dependent on how well-versed stakeholders are in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (Sulemana et al., 2018). This competency in M&E plays a crucial role in comprehending and interpreting the data gathered, thereby informing decisions pertaining to project execution (Herman's et al., 2011).

In a study conducted at Dedan Kimathi University, Kenya, Herman's et al. (2011) discovered that stakeholders' skill and understanding in M&E led to better utilization of resources, on-time project completion, and achievement of project objectives. This underscores the significance of stakeholder competency in M&E in steering projects towards their intended outcomes. Similarly, Tengan and Aigbavboa (2017) emphasized the crucial significance of stakeholders' knowledge and skills in M&E for effectively managing and mitigating risks in construction projects.

Stakeholders' proficiency in M&E can significantly enhance project performance by ensuring potential challenges are identified and addressed promptly.

Within the domain of faith-based organizations like FreshFire Church International, the importance of stakeholder competency in M&E is even more pronounced. As Kissi et al. (2019) observed, stakeholders in faith-based organizations have a deep obligation to the assignment of the organization, making their competency in M&E invaluable for aligning project objectives with the organization's broader goals.

The study conducted by Sulemana et al. (2018) further underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement in the M&E process of projects. The research, which involved 196 participants, revealed substantial levels of stakeholder participation in M&E among members of the Municipal Planning and Coordinating Unit (MPCU) as well as District Assembly members. However, participation was observed to be relatively low at the Zonal Council and community levels. The study recommended increased stakeholder engagement in the planning, implementation, M&E process, and capacity building to improve reporting to communities. Nonetheless, while these studies provide crucial insights, there is a conspicuous lack of research focusing specifically on Ghana, particularly concerning projects funded by faith-based organizations like FreshFire Church International. Di Maddaloni & Davis (2017) argue for context-specific studies to fully grasp the dynamics of faith-based projects.

Although the empirical literature emphasizes the importance of stakeholder competency in M&E in improving project performance, further study is required to dive deeper into this link within the unique context of faith-based initiatives in Ghana.

## **Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results on the Performance of Projects**

The incorporation of M&E outcomes into the decision-making process is a substantial determinant in the success of projects. As noted by Sulemana et al. (2018), applying M&E findings in guiding project execution is critical, as their study revealed that decisions informed by M&E results led to elevated project outcomes.

Further amplifying this point, Olala (2020) detailed the essential role of which efficient practice of M&E discoveries plays, not only achieving project objectives, but also in the management and mitigation of project-related risks. His research, which focused on infrastructural projects at Dedan Kimathi University, Kenya, indicated that utilising M&E results in decision-making processes could dramatically enhance project outcomes. In the context of the construction sector, Tengan & Aigbavboa (2017) brought to light the critical role of M&E findings in project management. Their investigation came to a conclusion that the performance of building projects was greatly improved by wise judgments and project changes based on efficient use of M&E data.

However, when it comes to faith-based organisations such as FreshFire Church International, the application of M&E results becomes even more crucial in aligning project outcomes with the broader goals of the organisation (Kissi et al., 2019). Despite the significance of this aspect, Kamau & Mohamed (2015) pointed out a glaring gap in research focusing on the specific impact of M&E result application on project performance within faith-based organisations, particularly in the Ghanaian context. In fact, not enough study has been conducted to examine this particular objective in Ghana or even Africa at large. This significant research deficit underscores the importance of this study's attempt to explore this specific objective.

While the empirical literature suggests that the application of M&E results can significantly boost project performance, there is a unrelenting requirement for more context-specific research. This is predominantly true for projects funded by faith-based organizations in Ghana and Africa, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play and helping to close the significant research gap.

### **Investigate the impact of M & E data Collection and Analysis on the Performance of Projects**

It is of utmost importance to understand how effective data collection and analysis within the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework affect project outcomes. These elements are the cornerstone for informed decision-making, strategic planning, and the assessment of project efficacy and efficiency (Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017). This specific objective, while being beneficial across various organizational settings, holds particular relevance for entities like FreshFire Church International and other faith-based organizations.

Di Maddaloni & Davis (2017) emphasize the necessity for high-quality and precise data during M&E activities, highlighting its direct impact on project outcomes. Data inaccuracies can lead to misinterpretations and decision-making errors, which could adversely affect the successful completion of projects. Complementing this viewpoint, Odhiambo et al., (2020) assert that the accuracy, timeliness, and pertinence of data are pivotal for an effective M&E process, which, in turn, exhibits a significant effect on project outcomes. The role of data analysis in this context is equally critical. As Odhiambo et al., (2020) posit, the methodology employed for M&E data analysis considerably influences the practical application of the results. Competent data analysis aids in discerning trends, patterns, and correlations in the collated information, thereby enabling superior decision-making and augmenting project outcomes.

The pertinence of this specific objective to the overarching research topic is substantial, as it provides a practical perspective on how M&E data putcomes affect the initiatives of projects financed by FreshFire Church International. This is not only beneficial for the project management team within the organization but also holds value for all members and beneficiaries of the church. It promotes transparency, accountability, and efficiency in resource utilization, which are critical for the realization of the church's mission and vision.

Despite the criticality of M&E data collection and analysis in project outcomes, there is a noticeable scarcity of studies addressing this specific objective. While research by Opolu & Muchai (2021); Kathongo et al., (2021); Kissi et al., (2019); Hermans et al., (2011); Tengan & Aigbavboa, (2017) have investigated the broader theme of M&E in project outcomes, a limited number of researchers have explored the specific element of M&E data gathering and analyzation. The present research aims to bridge this gap by offering an empirical examination of the influence of M&E data collection and analysis on the outcomes of projects supported by FreshFire Church International.

### **The moderation Effects of Government Policy and Stakeholder Attitude on the Relationship between M & E Principles and on the Performance of Projects**

Exploring the interplay between government policy, stakeholder attitudes, and the relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) principles and project outcomes is an important research domain. However, it is a field that has seen limited exploration, notably within the Ghanaian context and specifically within the scope of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) such as FreshFire Church International.

Harash (2013) conducted an investigation into the impact of government policy on performance, primarily focusing on larger corporations. This study underscored a significant void in comprehending how government policies and market practices moderate M&E planning and systems. While this study contributes valuable insights, it does not extend its focus to FBOs or the unique context of Ghana. Shariff (2011), in his research, affirmed the crucial role of government policy as a comprehensive moderator in the connection amongst M&E principles and initiative outcomes. Although the research, grounded in a city-based survey method involving SME owner-managers, offers valuable insights, it does not specifically cater to the context of FBOs or the region of Ghana.

Additional studies by Aris et al., (2020) and Joslin & Müller, (2015), while adding to the broader knowledge of the government's function, policy and stakeholder attitudes in M&E, did not specifically cater their research to the unique needs and context of FBOs like FreshFire Church International. The absence of research within the Ghanaian context, and particularly within FBOs like FreshFire Church International, marks a significant research gap. This is particularly important because the primary activities of FBOs are focused on enhancing the living conditions of people in Ghana. The collaboration between the government and FBOs is integral for development in countries like Ghana. Understanding how stakeholder attitudes and government policies affect the link within project outcomes and M&E principles may greatly increase the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Despite the criticality of this specific objective, there is a noticeable dearth of research addressing it. Thus, this research aims to bridge this gap by providing an empirical examination of the moderating influence of government policy and

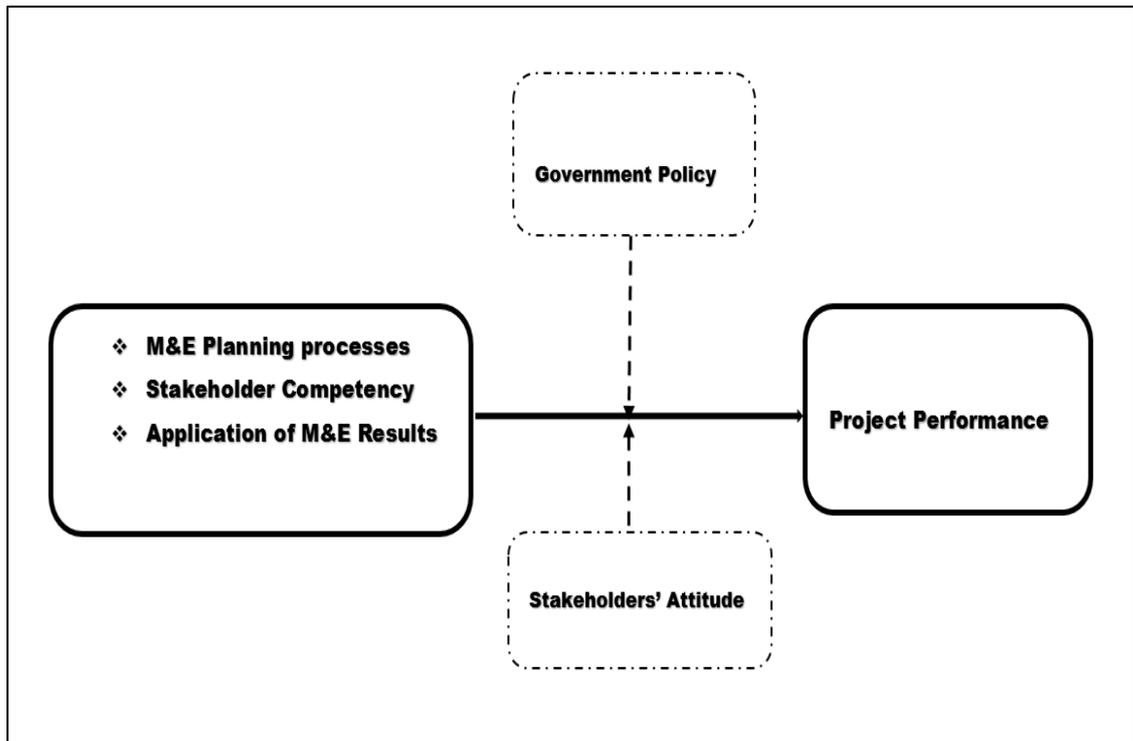
stakeholder attitudes on the relationship between M&E principles and the outcomes of projects supported by FreshFire Church International.

### **Research Gaps**

The research conducted by Mwari (2020) and Kaberia (2019) on the impact of monitoring and evaluation practices on the performance of projects funded by FBOs provided valuable insights for this study. Their research focused on the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems and their influence on project performance. It is worth noting that their study encompassed a larger population in Kenya, not limited to a specific FBO but the entire Kenyan District and province, making their findings more comprehensive. In a similar vein, Elias (2020) conducted research on the influence of monitoring and evaluation on project performance, specifically examining the case of Howard University in Lusaka province. This study emphasized the effective implementation of M&E practices for enhanced project performance. However, it is important to consider that the study had a relatively small sample size of only 15 respondents, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, Wideman (1996) conducted a study on the influence of monitoring and evaluation planning on project performance, focusing on selected NGOs in Gasabo District, Rwanda. While the research contributed significantly to this study by examining M&E planning and implementation systems, it is important to note that the study focused solely on NGOs, whereas FBOs play a substantial role in funding projects. Based on the aforementioned considerations, this current study aims to investigate the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations, specifically focusing on the case of FreshFire Church International in Ghana.

## Conceptual Framework

The framework depicted in Figure 1 will serve as a guiding tool for the remainder of the study, drawing evidence from the literature review and research objectives. The underlying premise is that M&E systems are designed to be implemented for effective project progress and performance within FBOs. This involves the establishment of M&E plans to assess the success of projects undertaken by FBOs. In the context of research, a conceptual framework refers to a graphical representation of the interrelation between independent variables and dependent variables (Mugenda, 2003). In this study, the conceptual framework serves as a means to illustrate the expected relationship between the variables or characteristics under investigation. Its purpose is to ascertain the extent to which the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variables. The independent variables in this framework encompass Monitoring and Evaluation Planning, Stakeholder Competency, Monitoring and Evaluation data collection and analysis, and the application of results. The dependent variable, as indicated in Figure 1, pertains to the performance of projects funded by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs).



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Source: Kaberia (2019)**

### Chapter Summary

Organizations utilize systematic processes known as monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the performance of their projects and achieve desired outcomes while efficiently utilizing resources. Faith-based organizations, on the other hand, are entities with a religious background that engage in social activities like education and healthcare to promote community well-being. Implementing M&E systems pose unique challenges for these organizations, primarily due to resource scarcity, lack of technical expertise, and potential resistance to change. However, despite these challenges, monitoring and evaluation systems are indispensable for FBOs in ensuring project success. They offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of interventions, identify areas for improvement, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making. By implementing robust M&E systems, FBOs such as FreshFire Church International can

enhance project performance, maximize their impact, and contribute to the overall development of the communities they serve.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Introduction

The investigation employs diverse approaches and tools to collect and scrutinize data pertaining to each research objective, with the aim of assessing the influence of monitoring and evaluation systems on the effectiveness of projects financed by faith-based organizations. The specific case study utilized in this research is FreshFire Church International located in Ghana. The methods employed encompass the research methodology, research design, target population, sample selection and sampling technique, research instrument, procedure for data collection, challenges encountered during data collection, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, and techniques utilized for data analysis.

#### Research Approach

To facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on the performance of projects sponsored by faith-based organizations (FBOs), this investigation employed a blended methodology, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This approach enables the exploration of the research inquiry from various vantage points, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks that complement one another. As elucidated by Myers and Powers (2017), this type of investigation empowers the researcher to attain a deeper understanding of the research matter than relying solely on either quantitative or qualitative methodologies. In this particular study, the quantitative data was derived from interactions with beneficiaries and members of FreshFire Church International's diverse branches, while the qualitative data was obtained from project managers, ensuring a comprehensive analysis.

Furthermore, in the quantitative aspect, a questionnaire was selected as the instrument for data collection. This questionnaire encompassed inquiries that highlighted the concerns of church members, project beneficiaries, M&E officers, and other relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of projects supported by FreshFire Church International (FFCI) in Ghana. As noted by Waithera and Wanyoike (2015), this method is well-suited for gathering quantitative data and has been utilized to quantify behaviors, behavior observation checklists, and performance instruments, underscoring the significance of these choices. To evaluate the impact of M&E practices on project performance, this study will utilize objective measures such as project completion rates and adherence to budgetary constraints. This form of data analysis involves statistical analysis of the scores obtained on the instruments to address research inquiries and test theories.

A semi-structured interview guide was utilized to get in-depth information from the project managers at FreshFire Church International. Similar to this, Oghenekohwo and Tonunarigha (2019) said that when analyzing qualitative data (words, text, or behaviors), it is typical to divide it into knowledge categories and display the range of concepts obtained during data collection. By utilizing this information, we can analyze the opinions and experiences of those stakeholders who are involved with regards to how important an aspect of M&E plays when considering project success. Additionally, it can help us determine potential obstacles or chances that exist for developing more efficient Monitoring & Evaluation strategies throughout FFCI-funded initiatives. Mixed-method research and data are particularly well-suited for this analysis as they enable a broader scope and deeper comprehension of the subject matter. By combining both quantitative and qualitative research approaches and data, it becomes possible to achieve a more comprehensive understanding and enhance the corroboration of

findings. This approach effectively addresses the limitations that arise when relying solely on either quantitative or qualitative methodologies. By integrating multiple research methods and data sources, the study can overcome the inherent shortcomings associated with using each methodology in isolation.

This study obtained a more complete picture of how monitoring and evaluation affect project performance by utilizing mixed-methods research. The use of both a quantitative and a qualitative component in this study provides easily replicable data for measuring project performance alongside detailed insights into stakeholder experiences and perceptions. Investigating these combined datasets provides an enhanced comprehension on improving project performance within faith-based organizations. Mixed-methods research affords greater probabilities for triangulation as found by Uitto (2010) and investigating the same phenomenon from several angles with different datasets is necessary. Incorporating numerous viewpoints along with diverse methods and techniques is key to precisely classifying various aspects of phenomena - an approach known as triangulation according to Oghenekohwo and Tonunarigha (2019). For successful triangulation in line with Johnson & Christensen's recommendations entails thoroughly examining the kinds of data presented by every system along with its merits and demerits. Numerous researchers argue that using a combination of methods is suitable for various instances. According to Olala (2020) views, this strategy can be applied when a researcher wants to verify or validate the results of other techniques.

Yokotani, Takagi, and Wakashima (2018) acknowledge that it is acceptable for researchers to utilize a mixed-methods approach when there is a need to verify or corroborate findings obtained through other methods. They also emphasize that employing such an approach is appropriate when researchers aim to examine a study

issue from multiple perspectives in order to explain unexpected results or possible inconsistencies. This approach enables researchers to elaborate, clarify, or draw upon observations from different approaches, thereby enhancing the analysis. Moreover, by adopting a mixed-methods approach, this research can effectively capture the comprehensive range of impacts that monitoring and evaluation have on the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations. The incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative data ensures a more robust and nuanced understanding of the relationship between M&E practices and project performance. This, in turn, facilitates the identification of effective strategies to enhance the impact of FreshFire Church International-funded projects in Ghana.

### **Research Design**

According to Yusuf (2020), research design refers to the framework followed to obtain answers to study problems. In this particular study, a cross-sectional descriptive design was adopted, as it allows for the examination of naturalistic data. As defined by Mugenda (2003), descriptive research seeks to define and present facts as they are. This research design enables the simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Sethi, & Philippines, 2012). The primary goal of a descriptive research design is to explore the perspectives of a specific population regarding existing practices and conditions. Descriptive research designs can include surveys, case studies, and causal-comparative approaches. In this study, the survey method was employed to solicit information from the respondents.

The analysis was guided by a descriptive survey, which was chosen based on the mixed-methods approach and the research objectives. By utilizing a descriptive survey, the researcher was able to establish factual information without manipulating the data. Descriptive surveys aim to provide a description of a particular behavior or

phenomenon. The descriptive design was selected because the study seeks to describe the relationship between different factors. As noted by Roza (2013), descriptive surveys are designed to accurately portray the characteristics of individuals, situations, or groups. They are often used as a needs assessment tool to gather information that can inform decision-making and serve as a foundation for further educational research programs.

Survey investigations, according to Weiss (1998), are intended to gather consistent and accurate information about the status of phenomena and, where feasible, make a variety of broad inferences from the facts gathered. Analyzing numerical data with a combination of inferential and descriptive statistics is instrumental in achieving research objectives with a descriptive survey. Additionally, a quick and inexpensive means for collecting information from numerous respondents is available through the use of this method. In order for a researcher to generalize their findings they must have a sample that accurately represents their target population.

Unlike other designs, surveys are not limited to a single case but can incorporate multiple organizations. Descriptive surveys also provide anonymity to respondents which can encourage participation and elicit honest responses (Kumar, 2020). The structured and standardized nature of surveys allows for easy comparison of responses across respondents (King, 2011). Therefore, a descriptive survey is a more appropriate design for gaining insights into the perceptions of stakeholders at FreshFire Church International and other similar organizations on the topic.

### **Study Area**

The West African nation of Ghana, a country with a populace of approximately 31 million individuals, serves as the research arena for this inquiry (2020, population

and housing census). Ghana is renowned for its religious diversity, with Christianity reigning supreme as the predominant faith. It is worth noting that faith-based organizations (FBOs) have contributed significantly to the country's overall development, particularly in areas of education, health, and social services. The organization's projects have had significant benefits on the lives of many Ghanaians, including church members, project managers, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.

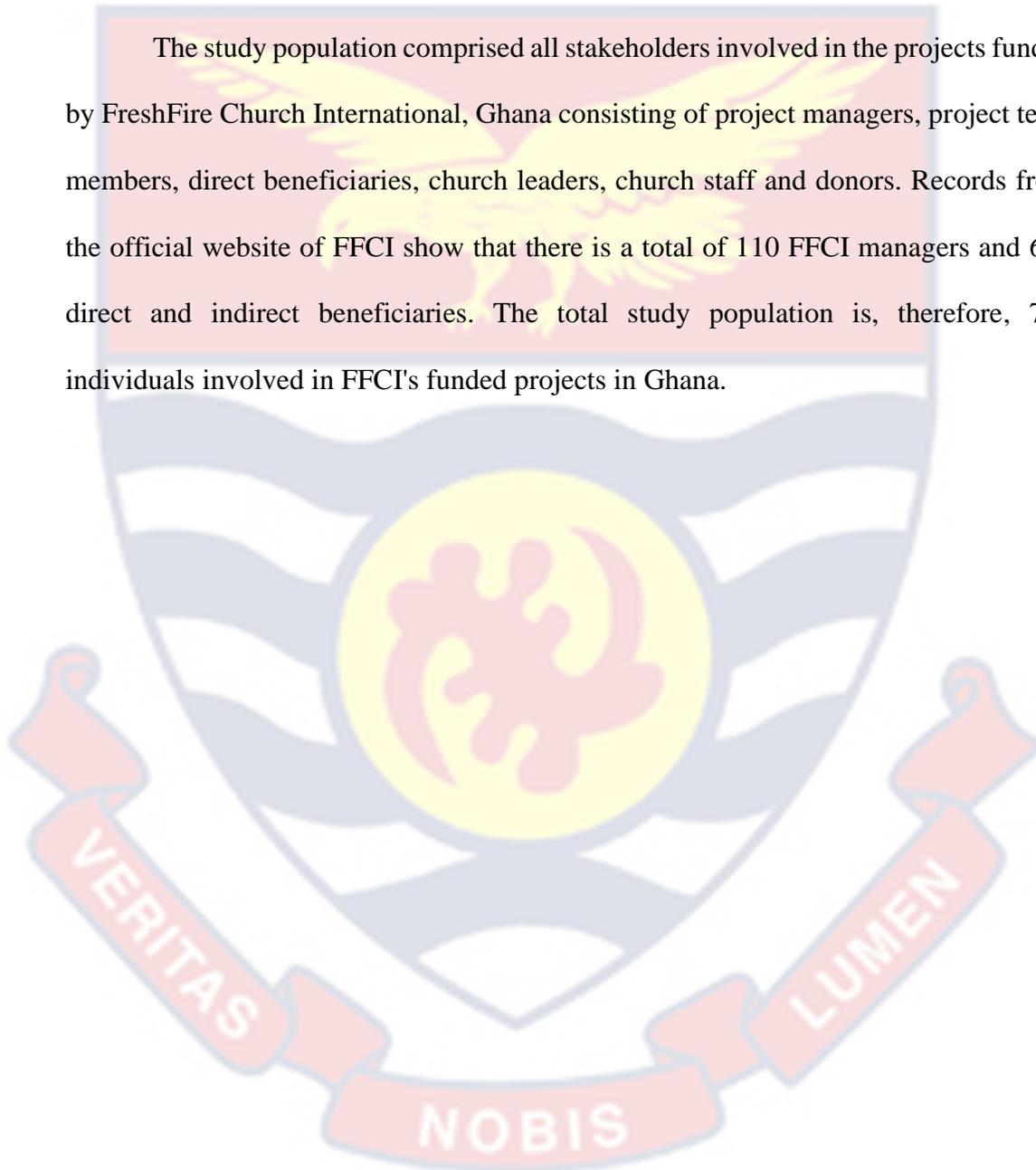
The crux of this study revolves around projects that have been financed by FreshFire Church International (FFCI), a faith-based organization that has a noticeable presence in Ghana. Fresh Fire Ministries International is a non-profit religious organization based in Ghana. They educate and equip Christian leaders to be good stewards and disciples for Christ. They feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and elderly. FFCI has been actively involved in numerous developmental initiatives, including but not limited to education, health, and community development projects. The projects implemented by the organization are distributed across various regions in Ghana, offering a diverse sample for examining the impact of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on project performance. The active involvement of church members from FreshFire Church International (FFCI) has played a crucial role in the successful implementation of these projects, providing valuable support throughout the process. They have contributed to the projects through financial donations, volunteerism, and other forms of assistance. The church members' unwavering commitment to the projects has been a key factor in their success, making them an integral part of the FFCI's development initiatives.

Overall, FFCI's development initiatives in Ghana have been relevant and impactful, contributing to the country's overall development. The organization's commitment to providing sustainable solutions to the country's development challenges

has made it a valuable partner in the development sector. Its various projects have not only improved the lives of many Ghanaians but have also contributed to the achievement of sustainable development outcomes in the country.

### **Population**

The study population comprised all stakeholders involved in the projects funded by FreshFire Church International, Ghana consisting of project managers, project team members, direct beneficiaries, church leaders, church staff and donors. Records from the official website of FFCI show that there is a total of 110 FFCI managers and 600 direct and indirect beneficiaries. The total study population is, therefore, 710 individuals involved in FFCI's funded projects in Ghana.



**Table 4: Distribution of Population by Status and their Description**

Category	Subcategory	Number of participants	Description
1	Project Managers	15	Individuals responsible for planning, executing, and closing projects
1	Project Team Members	60	Individuals who work on the project in various capacities, such as finance, procurement, or technical roles
2	Church Staff	20	Staff members who support the church's operations and project implementation
2	Church Leaders	10	High-level decision-makers at FreshFire Church International, such as pastors or board members
3	Donors	5	Representatives from funding agencies or individual donors who support the projects
4	Direct Beneficiaries	200	Individuals who directly benefit from the projects, such as recipients of services, training, or resources
4	Indirect Beneficiaries	400	Community members who indirectly benefit from the projects, such as family members or neighbors of direct beneficiaries
<b>Total</b>		<b>710</b>	

Source: Official website of FFCI, *freshfireworldwide.com.gh*

Others comprises monitoring and evaluation managers, monitoring and evaluation officers, external partners, government officials, and other officers.

### Sample

The sample size for the study was determined using Yamane's (1967) method for sample size for a limited population. The formula reads as follows:

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

Where

n = required sample size, N = population (710), e = confidence level (0.05)

by substitution,

$$n = \frac{710}{(1 + 710(0.05^2))}$$

$$n = \frac{710}{(1 + 710(0.0025))}$$

$$n = \frac{710}{(1 + 1.775)}$$

$$n = \frac{710}{2.775}$$

$$n = 256$$

The estimated sample size for the study was determined to be 256 individuals using a specific formula. This sample size included 110 FFCI managers and 146 direct and indirect beneficiaries. To select the FFCI managers for the study, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Creswell (2012) describes stratified random sampling as a method of randomly sampling respondents from distinct strata within a population. In this case, the population was divided into two strata: FFCI managers and project beneficiaries, allowing for a representative sample from both groups.

### Sampling Procedure

By using the stratified sample approach, the study was able to include participants from all population subgroups. This method of sampling is well-known for improving the sample's statistical effectiveness and providing enough information to analyze a variety of subpopulations (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). To ensure adequate representation, the population was initially divided into four main categories: Project Managers and Members, Church Staff and Leaders, Donors, and Project Beneficiaries. The subcategories were further divided into Project Officers, Resource Officers, and Team Leaders under Project Officers, and Program Managers, Middle and Top-Level Managers under Program Managers. This approach allowed for a comprehensive representation of the different subgroups within the population.

The sample size for each category was determined through proportionate sampling. Table 2 details the samples for the various types of responders.

**Table 5: Sample Size Distribution**

Category	Population	Proportion	Sample Size
Project managers	15	0.0211	6
Project members	60	0.0845	22
Church staff	20	0.0282	8
Church leaders	10	0.0141	4
Donors	5	0.0070	2
Direct beneficiaries	200	0.2817	72
Indirect beneficiaries	400	0.5634	162
<b>Total</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>256</b>

Source: Field Study, 2023

## Research Instrument

A questionnaire and an interview guide were both used in conjunction with one another to gather the data. The interview guide was used to get more detailed information from church leaders and contributors, while the questionnaire was given to both recipients and church personnel. The questionnaire comprised five distinct sections, each serving a specific purpose. In the initial section, respondents' personal backgrounds were examined, encompassing factors such as age, gender, and classification. The subsequent section delved into the utilization of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) planning within FFCI. This segment explored various aspects, including the significance of M&E planning within FFCI and the correlation between project accomplishment and M&E strategy. Moving forward, the third section concentrated on assessing stakeholder competence in monitoring and evaluation systems, specifically regarding the impact on the performance of projects financed by FFCI.

Within this section, several inquiries were explored, encompassing aspects such as the fairness of the M&E system, the professionalism exhibited by M&E leaders in implementing M&E systems, and the satisfaction derived from the M&E planning process. The subsequent section, section four, revolved around the practical application of monitoring and evaluation results in project success. The questions presented in this part aimed to capture the significance of M&E results in enhancing project performance, as well as identifying methods to leverage M&E results for improved project execution and the reduction of inefficiencies. Finally, the fifth segment assessed the efficacy of the monitoring and evaluation system in ensuring the achievement of project objectives. This section probed into the effectiveness of employing monitoring

and evaluation systems to identify the needs of beneficiaries, as well as the effectiveness of utilizing such systems to enhance beneficiary capacity.

The interview guide encompassed various aspects related to the utilization of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems at FFCI. It explored the diverse applications of M&E systems within the organization, delving into how these systems serve to motivate M&E staff to enhance their job performance. Additionally, the guide assessed the efficiency of the procedures for tracking and assessing in ensuring the realization of M&E goals pertaining to project performance for projects funded by FFCI. Furthermore, the interview guide also inquired about the overarching goals for FFCI's monitoring and evaluation systems and solicited feedback regarding their effectiveness.

### **Data Collection Process**

The researcher submitted a report to FFCI's Department of Projects and Community Outreach, wherein they initially introduced themselves and outlined the purpose of the study to the Head Pastor. The primary objective was to obtain the Church management's consent for conducting the data collection exercise. Once the consent was obtained, the investigator proceeded to identify and approach the sampled M&E staff for interviews. The researcher introduced themselves to the respondents, secured their consent to participate, and then proceeded with the study. The questionnaire was provided to the participants, who were requested to indicate their preferred time for administering the instrument. Their identities and the specific timings were carefully noted. In accordance with the designated times, further visits were conducted to collect the completed surveys. Furthermore, appointments were scheduled with the Head Pastors and Donor Agencies for conducting interviews, ensuring that their consent was secured prior to the interviews taking place.

## Data Analysis

To ensure data integrity, a thorough data cleaning process was conducted to identify and rectify any inconsistencies present. Furthermore, each questionnaire was assigned unique identification numbers to prevent duplication during data entry. The collected data from the questionnaires was then entered into Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS Version 27.0.1) for processing. SPSS was chosen due to its extensive range of data analysis capabilities. For the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were employed for analysis. On the other hand, the qualitative data was transcribed and carefully reviewed for grammatical errors. Subsequently, thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data using content analysis techniques.

## Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic and unbiased approach used to analyze qualitative data, such as responses from surveys or transcripts of interviews. Its purpose is to identify and categorize recurring themes or patterns present in the data (Stemler, 2000). According to Roza (2013), researchers employ content analysis to understand the purposes, messages, and effects of communication content. Additionally, according to Haggarty (2022), using the study method of content analysis, the methodical and reliable analysis of data that is qualitative and allows for the inference of generalizations from the study's results.

In this study, content analysis is utilized to accomplish several objectives. Content analysis serves multiple purposes in the realm of communication research, employing a diverse range of methods. These purposes encompass a wide spectrum, from unveiling the underlying motives, focal points, or prevailing communication trends exhibited by individuals, groups, or institutions, to providing a comprehensive

description of attitudinal and behavioral responses evoked by different forms of communication. Also, content analysis assists in identifying the psychological or emotional state of both individuals and groups, while also unearthing cross-cultural disparities within communication content. Its utility extends to uncovering recurrent patterns within the fabric of communication itself. Importantly, content analysis holds significant value in the pre-testing and refinement of interventions or surveys prior to their implementation. Lastly, it represents an invaluable tool for scrutinizing qualitative data sourced from focus group interviews and open-ended questions, thus complementing quantitative data analysis techniques (Content Analysis, 2023).

To ensure a rigorous analysis of the qualitative data in this study, a content analysis approach was adopted. Content analysis is a well-established method in the field of social sciences that enables a systematic and objective examination of textual data. It aims to identify and interpret patterns, themes, and meanings within the data (Stemler, 2000). In this particular study, content analysis was employed to analyze the transcribed and edited qualitative data obtained from the responses of church leaders and donors to interview questions.

The process of content analysis involved several key steps. Initially, the qualitative data were carefully reviewed to become familiar with the material. This made it possible to establish a thorough grasp of the data and to spot recurrent thoughts, concepts, or themes that developed from the views of the participants in relation to the influence of project performance monitoring and evaluation systems. These steps ensured that the responses obtained from the interview questions aligned with the specific objectives of the study, which aimed to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation systems of FreshFire Church International in Ghana were appropriately aligned with their operations.

### **Ethical Consideration**

As part of the report, it was imperative to address ethical concerns related to respondent privacy and answer confidentiality. Consequently, the researcher took measures to safeguard the personal identities of the respondents and refrained from collecting any information that could potentially compromise their privacy. Another ethical consideration taken into account was ensuring that respondents were granted sufficient time to complete the research instrument, minimizing any undue interference with their work responsibilities. In adherence to ethical standards, the report received approval from the FFCI Review Board after seeking their consultation on ethical matters. Additionally, in order to streamline the data collection process, the Department facilitated the research endeavor by sending an introductory letter.

### **Pilot Test**

At the Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG), a pre-testing activity was carried out to improve the validity and reliability of the research tools. The primary aim of this exercise was to assess and refine the queries intended for the study. During the pre-testing phase, careful monitoring of the administration process was carried out, paying attention to factors such as the time required for completing the research instrument, as well as the order and adequacy of the questions. The pre-testing exercise involved the administration of approximately 15 questionnaires and two interview guides. A thorough analysis of the data collected during this phase revealed that the questions pertaining to the first research objectives exhibited a reliability rate of 87%. Furthermore, the KMO values indicated that these questions accounted for approximately 89% of the variations observed in the impact of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) planning on the performance of projects funded by CHAG. Finally, the ANOVA results demonstrated significant variations in the responses, as indicated

by the p-value, suggesting that at least one group's mean differed significantly from another. Further details regarding the other two research objectives can be found in Table 3.

**Table 6: Reliability of Research Objectives**

Research Objective	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability (%)	KMO / Bartlett's Test	ANOVA F-Statistic	Sig-Value
Assess the impact of M&E Planning on the performance Of projects funded by CHAG	0.87	87	0.89/0.001	31.58	0.000
Assess the impact of Stakeholder competency in Monitoring and Evaluation on the performance of projects funded by CHAG	0.91	91	0.93/0.002	27.41	0.000
<b>Establish the impact of the application of Monitoring and Evaluation results on the performance of projects funded by CHAG</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>0.85/0.003</b>	<b>25.23</b>	<b>0.000</b>

Source: Field Survey data, (2023)

Cronbach's alpha values represented the internal consistency reliability of scales that were used to measure each research objective by the researcher, while measuring the consistency of similar results generated over time by the actions taken indicates the reliability percentage. Adequacy of data collection can be ascertained by administering KMO/Bartlett's test which requires a minimum score of 0 by performing an ANOVA

F-statistic test we can check if there are any notable variations in the average values of different groups - with lower p-values suggesting that some group averages differ.

The information provided in the table shows that all three research objectives are very reliable and consistent. This means that we can trust the results we get from the study because they are accurate. The statistical tests also show that the study has the potential to provide meaningful findings, which is good for our study. Based on this information, it is recommended to continue with the study using FreshFire Church International, Ghana as the subject for research.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter delved into the detailed exploration of the methods and activities employed to derive the results. It encompasses an in-depth examination of the research design, study population, sample selection process, and data analysis techniques utilized. Employing a mixed-method research design, this analysis involved a substantial population of 710 participants, with a targeted sample size of 256 respondents. The data collection process encompassed the utilization of both questionnaires and interview guides. Prior to the main study, a meticulous pre-test was conducted, incorporating various statistical approaches to ensure robustness. Parameters such as Cronbach's alpha values, KMO/Bartlett's test, ANOVA F-statistic tests, and significant differences were considered to gauge the internal consistency and reliability of the research objectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

With a focus on FreshFire Church International in Ghana, this chapter explores the findings of the study on the effect of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms on the performance of projects financed by faith-based organizations. The research explicitly presents the results for the questionnaire return rate, respondent demographic data, descriptive reports on M & E practices on project performance, inferential statistics, and discussion of conclusions in this chapter.

#### Questionnaire Response Rate

The success of data collection through questionnaires is closely tied to the response rate, which signifies the ratio of returned questionnaires from the targeted sample. A sample of 256 people received questionnaires, of which 210 completed them and returned them. According to Song et al. (2014), this resulted in a return rate of 81.6%, which is a significant response rate for statistical analysis. Table 4 displays the answer summary.

**Table 7: Response Rate**

Category	Questionnaires Administered	Total Completed	Response Rate (%)
Project managers	6	4	66.7
Project members	22	14	63.6
Church staff	8	6	75.0
Church leaders	4	3	75.0
Donors	2	2	100.0
Direct beneficiaries	72	56	77.8
Indirect beneficiaries	162	124	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>81.6</b>

Source: Field data (2023)

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Based on the respondents' gender, age, designation, rank, and number of years of affiliation with Freshfire Church International, the first component of the survey asked them to provide background information. Understanding how certain features may affect the variables under examination requires an understanding of the demographic characteristics of study participants. The outcomes are shown in Table 8 below.

**Table 8: Demographic Information of Respondents (N = 209)**

Variable	Subscale	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	115	55.0
	Female	94	45.0
Age	Less than 20 years	4	2.1
	20 - 29 years	79	37.9
	30 - 39 years	95	45.3
	More than 39 years	31	14.7
	Designation	Church Member	180
	Project Member	14	6.7
	Donor	2	0.9
Rank	Church Leader	3	1.4
	Project Manager	4	1.9
	Church Staff	6	2.9
		77	36.9
		132	63.1

Source: Field Data (2023)

As clearly shown in the table above, the vast majority of responses, 155 (55.0%), were males while 94 (45.0%) were females. This demonstrated that the study took into account all respondents, regardless of their gender, to get accurate data about the effect of monitoring and evaluation methods on the performance of projects. The comparative analysis between male and female involvement and their influence on project outcomes was particularly important.

Also, with the age range of respondents, the majority, representing 95 (45.3%), were within 30-39 years, 79 (37.9%) were 20-29 years, 31 (14.7%) of respondents were more than 39 years while only 4 (2.1%) were under the ages less than 20 years. This shows that the majority of respondents were within the middle age. It implies that

projects funded by faith-based organizations, such as Freshfire Church International, will need robust monitoring and evaluation systems to optimize the performance and outcomes of these initiatives. Particularly in this era of rapid change and data abundance, a significant level of expertise might be necessary to discern, interpret, and utilize valid and reliable data for effective project management.

In connection with the designation of respondents, the majority, representing 180 (86.2%), church members, 14 (6.7%) were project members, while the least of 2 (0.9%) were donors of the projects undertaken by Freshfire church international. The integration of stakeholder perspectives was vital, considering that stakeholder involvement is one of the determining elements that affect the outcome of a task.

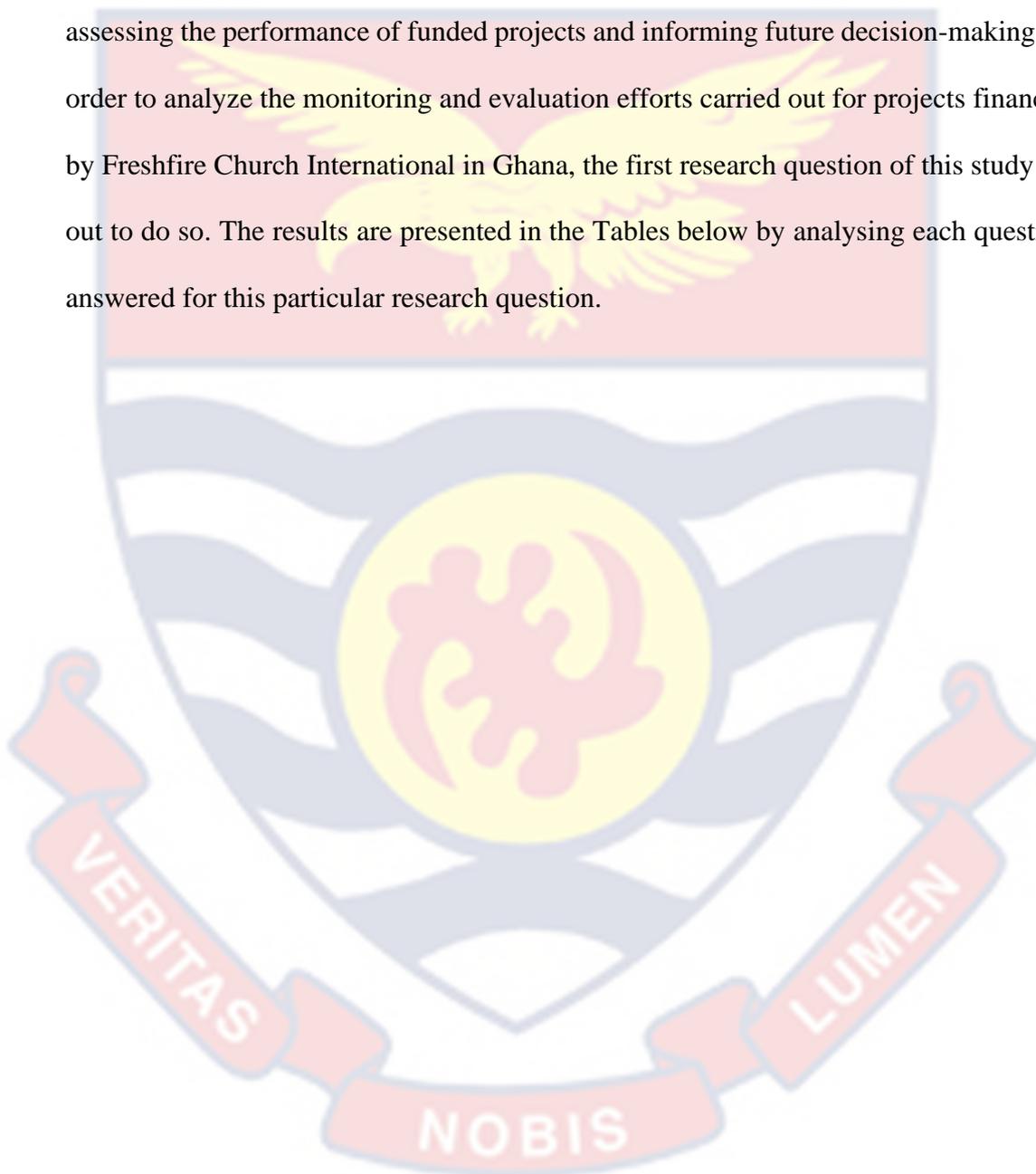
In terms of the ranks of respondents, the minority, representing 3 (1.4%), were Church Leaders, while 4 (1.9%) of respondents were Project Managers. In addition, results from the analysis revealed that the majority, representing 6 (2.9%) of the respondents, were Church Staff members.

As clearly illustrated in the data provided, the majority of the respondents, 132 (63.1%), had been associated with Freshfire Church International for six years or more, while 77 (36.9%) had been associated with the organization for a period of zero to five years. This distribution offers an understanding of the tenure of individuals involved in projects, which might influence their perception of the impact of mechanisms for tracking and evaluating the success of programs funded by this faith-based organizations.

## Discussion

### Research Question One: Monitoring and Evaluation planning process.

Monitoring and evaluation processes form vital component of project management in faith-based organizations. These processes perform a vital role in assessing the performance of funded projects and informing future decision-making. In order to analyze the monitoring and evaluation efforts carried out for projects financed by Freshfire Church International in Ghana, the first research question of this study set out to do so. The results are presented in the Tables below by analysing each question answered for this particular research question.



**Table 9: Monitoring and Evaluation planning process (N = 209)**

Variable/ items	Frequency	Percentage
<b>M &amp; E activities performed</b>		
Yes	189	90.4
No	20	9.6
<b>Methods used for M &amp; E process</b>		
Document review	10	4.8
Interviews with project stakeholders	18	8.6
Surveys/questionnaires	179	85.6
Site visits/field observations	2	1.0
<b>Frequency of M &amp; E Activities Performed</b>		
Once a year	177	84.7
Twice a year	22	10.5
Irregular	10	4.8
<b>Methods used for M &amp; E data collection</b>		
Self-reporting by project staff	153	73.3
Data collection from beneficiaries/end-users	19	9.1
Data collection from community members	18	8.6
Review of project deliverables/documents	19	9.1
<b>Channel of communication of feedback from M&amp;E activities to project stakeholders</b>		
Formal written report	190	90.9
Formal verbal presentation/meeting	6	2.9
Informal written report	3	1.4
<b>Components of M &amp; E report</b>		
Identified areas of improvement	45	21.5
Recognized project achievements/successes	72	34.4
Recommended future actions or adjustments	50	23.9
Suggested next steps for the project	42	20.1

Source: Field Data (2023)

The results presented in Table 9 provide an insight into the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices of projects funded by Freshfire Church International in Ghana. A significant majority (90.4%) of respondents confirmed that M&E activities were indeed conducted for these projects, which aligns with the assertion made by

Kultar et al. (2017) that M&E systems provide real-time information on the progress of projects in terms of achieving their immediate outputs. This suggests that the theory is in practice at Freshfire Church International in Ghana.

The most common method of M&E was through surveys or questionnaires (85.6%), while site visits or field observations were the least used (1.0%). This indicates that while the church may be gathering quantitative data through surveys, they might be missing out on qualitative data that could be gathered from field observations. This finding resonates with Onyango (2019), who argues that M&E systems are an important building block of a performance-oriented policy cycle, suggesting that a balance of methods could improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency of these processes.

The frequency of M&E activities is also a critical factor in their efficacy. The majority of respondents (84.7%) reported that these activities were conducted once a year, while a small proportion (4.8%) reported an irregular schedule. This may not align with the best practices suggested by Tengan and Aigbavboa (2017), who might argue for a more frequent or regular schedule to ensure real-time feedback and timely corrective measures.

When it comes to data collection for M&E, self-reporting by project staff was the primary method (73.3%), with less emphasis placed on data collection from beneficiaries or end-users (9.1%) or community members (8.6%). This could suggest a potential gap in gathering feedback from those most affected by the projects, which may affect the comprehensiveness of the M&E process.

Concerning the communication of feedback from M&E activities, formal written reports were overwhelmingly the most used method (90.9%). This aligns with

best practices, ensuring that findings are documented and can be referred to in the future. However, the relatively lower use of formal verbal presentations or informal discussions (2.9% and 4.8% respectively) could indicate a missed opportunity for more interactive and immediate feedback sessions.

Ultimately, the contents of M&E reports mostly recognized project achievements and successes (34.4%), with less emphasis on identifying areas of improvement (21.5%) or outlining future directions for the project (20.1%). This finding suggests that while achievements are rightly celebrated, there could be a stronger focus on using M&E reports as a tool for continuous improvement and strategy development, in line with the perspectives of Tengan and Aigbavboa (2017). The primary objective was to explore the monitoring and evaluation systems of projects sponsored by Freshfire Church International, Ghana. This process encompassed the establishment of project benchmarks, communication of these benchmarks, evaluating project results, contrasting the actual outcomes with the benchmarks, discussing the evaluation findings, and making necessary adjustments. These stages were modeled after the core components of effective monitoring and evaluation systems. The perspectives of project leaders, donors, and church administrators were considered in the analysis of the systems' efficacy.

The administrators of projects, church leaders in areas like Community Development, Healthcare, and Education expressed their views that:

*“Our approach to setting up monitoring and evaluation systems for projects we fund is both thorough and team-oriented. We begin by clearly defining the project's goals and objectives. Working closely with project teams, we then develop specific indicators that are aligned with these objectives. These*

*indicators are designed to be measurable and enable us to keep track of progress. We also establish a timeline for conducting evaluations, which typically occur at various stages throughout the project. To monitor these indicators, we make use of tools such as logframes and performance tracking tables. Additionally, we assign a monitoring and evaluation team, which may include both project staff and external evaluators, to oversee these efforts.”* -

Church Leader 1 (Interview date: 13/05/2023)

*“Our approach to creating performance standards and indicators for our projects involves a collaborative effort between the project team, church leadership, and occasionally, key stakeholders. We rely on our project goals and objectives to establish standards and indicators that are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. We also take into account the project's context, potential impact, and available resources during this process. To ensure the effectiveness of these standards and indicators in evaluating the project's performance, we conduct regular reviews. By following this approach, we can ensure that our projects remain focused on achieving our mission and producing measurable results.”* - Church Leader 2 (Interview date:

14/05/2023)

Based on the responses provided, it appears that FreshFire Church International adopts a collaborative approach when planning and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems for their projects. This involves both church leaders and project teams working together to define the project's goals and objectives, and subsequently developing specific indicators that are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. These indicators are designed to align with the project's

goals, potential impact, and available resources, highlighting the church's commitment to inclusivity and thoroughness in project management.

The church leaders also emphasized the importance of effectively communicating these standards and indicators to all stakeholders involved in the project. Clear communication ensures that everyone has a shared understanding of project expectations and can work towards achieving these goals. This approach is supported by Tengan and Aigbavboa (2017), who suggest that involving stakeholders in the process of setting performance standards fosters fairness and thoroughness in organizations. Overall, FreshFire Church International's approach to monitoring and evaluation appears to be grounded in collaboration, inclusivity, and effective communication.

The following phase in the monitoring and evaluation process is the communication of these standards and indicators to those involved in the project. In response to the question regarding this process, the church leaders provided the following insights:

*“In evaluating the performance of our funded projects at FreshFire Church International, we employ a variety of methods and tools. Primarily, we use performance tracking tables and logical framework approach (logframes) to monitor our progress against the defined indicators. These tools help us quantify our achievements and identify any gaps in real-time. Additionally, we conduct regular project reviews and audits, which provide qualitative insights into project status and effectiveness. Occasionally, we also engage external evaluators for an unbiased assessment of our projects' performance. Importantly, these methods are not standalone; they are integrated and*

*mutually informative, providing us with a comprehensive view of the project's performance. This holistic approach helps us ensure that our projects are on track to achieve their intended impact.” - Church Leader 1 (Interview date: 13/05/2023)*

*“At FreshFire Church International, we believe in transparency and timely communication, especially regarding the monitoring and evaluation results of our projects. Typically, we relay these results through formal reports and meetings. We prepare detailed reports that highlight key achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. These reports are then shared with church leaders and project staff during scheduled meetings. In these meetings, we discuss the results, explaining the implications on the project's progress and future directions. We also use digital platforms for communication, especially when immediate attention is required or for team members who may not be physically present. Our goal is to ensure that everyone involved in the project is informed about its progress and has an opportunity to contribute to discussions and decisions.” - Church Leader 2 (Interview date: 14/05/2023)*

Based on the responses provided by the leaders, it appears that FreshFire Church International utilizes a variety of tools and methods to evaluate project performance. These tools include performance tracking tables, log frames, regular audits, and external evaluations, which provide both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The use of multiple tools allows for a comprehensive evaluation, ensuring that performance is measured accurately against defined standards. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Nuguti (2009), who suggest using multiple channels to ensure accurate monitoring and evaluation systems.

Regarding the communication of monitoring and evaluation results, FreshFire Church International employs both direct and indirect methods. Formal reports, meetings, and digital platforms are used to share detailed information about project progress, achievements, and challenges. While specific monitoring and evaluation results may be embedded within broader project updates, the use of multiple communication methods ensures that all project stakeholders are informed. This aligns with the practices suggested by Nuguti (2009), who note the effectiveness of using various channels to disseminate information.

Finally, the church leaders emphasized the importance of using monitoring and evaluation results to enhance project performance and outcomes. These results are used to identify areas for improvement, inform future decision-making, and ensure accountability. By using monitoring and evaluation results in this way, FreshFire Church International can continuously improve the effectiveness of its projects and achieve better outcomes.

The subsequent phase of the monitoring and evaluation process is to utilize these results to enhance project performance and outcomes. To explore this, the church leaders were asked about their practices in using monitoring and evaluation results. The responses obtained are as follows:

*As a donor to FreshFire Church International, I appreciate the measures the church takes to discuss the monitoring and evaluation results with us. The church organizes review meetings, where project teams present their findings, achievements, and challenges. Sometimes, these meetings are one-on-one, especially when the project is of a sensitive nature or requires detailed attention. However, in instances where personal meetings are not possible,*

*digital communication, including emails and video conferences, are used. In these communications, we receive comprehensive reports and updates on the projects we have funded. These reports provide a detailed review of the project progress against the set indicators, which allows us to understand the impact of our donation and the performance of the project.” - Donor 1 (Interview date: 13/05/2023)*

*“As a regular donor to FreshFire Church International, I've observed that the application of monitoring and evaluation results significantly contributes to the performance and success of the projects I fund. The systematic monitoring and evaluation process they have in place allows them to promptly identify and rectify any issues, which in turn enhances the project's efficiency. It also ensures the projects remain aligned with their original objectives and are adaptable to changing circumstances. The church's commitment to sharing these results with us donors not only reaffirm our trust in their work but also enables us to see the tangible impact of our contributions. This transparency and accountability have, in my opinion, played a significant role in enhancing the performance and overall success of the projects funded by FreshFire Church International.” Donor 2 (Interview date: 14/05/2023)*

The responses indicate that the process of discussing monitoring and evaluation results at FreshFire Church International is not confined to an identical routine, either for each person or for each project. That reveals the vision and motivation of these discussions can alter to correspond with prevailing surroundings. For instance, at times the focus may be on the impact of the project on the community, while at other times, the focus could shift to how well the project aligns with the church's mission. This

flexibility reflects the church's adaptive approach in discussing and utilizing monitoring and evaluation results.

The donors' responses highlight the church's use of multiple communication channels such as personal meetings, emails, and video conferences to discuss these results. This method, sometimes referred to as triangulation is advocated in research works. For instance, Ogula (2002) suggested that relying solely on a single source could distort the interpretation of results. Therefore, by employing multiple channels, the church is more likely to foster a comprehensive and realistic understanding of the project's performance among its stakeholders.

The application of monitoring and evaluation results has been recognised by the donors as a key factor contributing to the project's performance and success. This is underpinned by the church's ability to identify, rectify, and adapt to issues in real-time, thereby enhancing project efficiency and alignment with set objectives.

### **Research Question Two: Impact of Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation**

The respondents were asked to rate the degree of stakeholder competency's influence on the performance of projects financed by FreshFire Church International during monitoring and evaluation.

**Table 10: Impact of Stakeholder Competency (N=209)**

Statements	LI	MI	HI	Mean	Std. Dev.
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)		
i. Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation effectively identifies the strengths and weaknesses of projects.	22 10.10	68 31.3	119 54.8	2.80	0.402
i. Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation enables effective decision-making for project improvements.	- 0.00	48 23.0	161 77.0	2.77	0.422
i. Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation enhances project accountability and transparency.	10 4.80	35 16.7	164 78.5	2.88	0.354
v. Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation ensures effective utilization of project resources.	- 0.00	21 10.0	188 90.0	2.94	0.234

Source: Field Data (2023)

Note: LI = Low Impact, MI= Moderate Impact HI= High Impact

Based on the findings presented in Table 10, a substantial majority of the participants (79.8%) in the study expressed the belief that stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation plays a crucial role in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. This aligns with the findings of Chauveron (2021), who emphasized the impact of competency on performance. As applicable, Hall et al. (2020) highlighted practical techniques for assessing stakeholder competency, such as stakeholder identification, inclusion, participation in evaluations, monitoring tools, and focus groups. However, the study revealed a standard deviation of 0.402, suggesting a moderate variation in the

responses, indicating that the belief in the importance of stakeholder competency is not equally strong among all respondents. This variation might be attributed to individual differences in experiences or perceptions of stakeholder competency's impact on project performance.

Interestingly, none of the respondents rated stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation as having a low impact on effective decision-making for project improvements. Instead, a significant majority (77.0%) with the standard deviation of 0.422 and a mean of 2.77 regarded it as having a high impact. This supports the notion that stakeholder competency is influential in facilitating effective decision-making. Hall et al. (2020) echo this sentiment, emphasizing stakeholder participation in evaluations and monitoring. However, the relatively higher standard deviation compared to the mean suggests that while the majority of respondents agree on the importance of stakeholder competency, there is a significant variation in the degree of its perceived impact on decision-making. The majority of participants (89%) acknowledged the high impact of stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation on enhancing project accountability and transparency. This finding is supported by Chauveron (2021) suggested that competency can contribute to project accountability. The lower standard deviation of 0.354 in this case suggests a stronger consensus about the importance of stakeholder competency in promoting accountability and transparency. The overwhelming consensus among the respondents strengthens the argument that stakeholder competency is crucial for ensuring accountability and transparency in projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

Regarding the effective utilization of project resources, the the mean of 2.94 and a standard deviation of 0.234 indicate that stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation has a high impact, according to a significant majority of the respondents

(94.2%). The relatively lower standard deviation indicates a strong agreement among the respondents about the importance of stakeholder competency in resource utilization, as Chauveron (2021) argued that competency can enhance the efficient utilization of resources. It is noteworthy that none of the respondents perceived stakeholder competency to have a low impact, further emphasizing its importance in resource utilization. This overwhelmingly positive response indicates a strong consensus among participants that stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation is essential for the effective utilization of resources in projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

The data extracted from this study provides a shred of robust empirical evidence supporting the crucial significance of stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation for the successful implementation of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. That considered, the observed diversity in responses hints at the potential for additional investigation and deeper comprehension of individual perspectives and experiences concerning the influence of stakeholder competency on project performance.

In considering the overall research question that dealt with the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems, the church leaders had this to say:

*Monitoring and evaluation systems provide essential insights into project progression, effective resource utilization, and achievement of set objectives. By revealing the areas of improvement early on, these systems promote timely adjustments, ensuring project success. They also foster transparency and accountability to our contributors. For instance, in a recent community center project, such systems enabled us to stay within budget and*

*timeline. While they've proven beneficial, I believe integrating participatory approaches into these systems could enhance their effectiveness. By involving beneficiaries more, we can better understand their needs, making our projects even more impactful.* - Church Leader 2 (Interview date: 14/05/2023).

This indicates that ensuring the implementation of M&E systems plays a crucial role in managing resources, meeting project objectives, and maintaining accountability. These systems have proven to be beneficial in a recent community center project, demonstrating their practical application. In that line, the church leader astutely recognizes the untapped potential for improvement, specifically by embracing the application of Results-Based Management Theory. Their vision entails engaging all stakeholders, both directly and indirectly, to actively contribute their expertise and efforts towards attaining sustainable outcomes. By adopting this approach, the leader envisions that the project can effectively address the unique needs of the community, siding with the assertion of Crawford and Bryce (2011). Therefore, it was revealed that stakeholder competency has impact on monitoring and evaluation on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

### **Research Question Three: Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results**

The following statements on the use of monitoring and evaluation findings on the performance of projects financed by FreshFire Church International were presented to the respondents, and they were asked to score their degree of agreement with each.

Please score each statement using the scale below:

1 = Agree

2 = Undecided

3 = Disagree

**Table 11: Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results (N=209)**

Statements	A	U	D	Mean	Std. Dev.
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)		
i. The application of monitoring and evaluation results contributes to the overall success of projects.	195 93.3	14 6.7	0 0.00	1.07	0.251
i. The application of monitoring and evaluation results helps identify areas for improvement in projects.	204 97.6	5 2.4	0 0.00	1.02	0.153
i. The application of monitoring and evaluation results enhances the accountability of project implementation.	207 99.0	2 1.00	0 0.00	1.01	0.098
7. The application of monitoring and evaluation results ensures the efficient use of project resources.	202 96.7	5 2.4	2 0.9	1.04	0.246
7. The application of monitoring and evaluation results leads to better decision-making in project management.	208 99.5	1 0.5	0 0.00	1.00	0.069

Source: Field Data (2023)

The results presented in Table 4.5 provide significant insights into the impact of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems on the performance of projects funded by Freshfire Church International in Ghana. A striking majority (93.3%) of the respondents agreed that incorporating M&E outcomes significantly contributes to project success. This finding is congruent with the assertion by Bullen & Bullen (2022), who stress the importance of systematic steps in M&E planning, starting with identifying program

goals and objectives. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.251 indicates a strong agreement among respondents, thus reinforcing the significance of M&E systems in project performance. However, the variation in responses, albeit small, suggests that some stakeholders may require further evidence or understanding of M&E's contribution to project success.

A small proportion (6.7%) of respondents expressed their reservations about the influence of M&E on project success. Although they didn't oppose the idea, their indecisiveness might suggest a need for clearer communication or more evidence of the direct impact of M&E outcomes on project achievements. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.251 indicates a relatively narrow range of responses, suggesting that while there are reservations, there is a general consensus among the respondents on the M&E results of the overall success of projects.

A near-unanimous agreement was recorded from the second question which sought to identify the application of monitoring and evaluation results in identifying areas for improvement in projects. An overwhelming majority (97.6%) of respondents believed that applying M&E results helps in identifying areas for improvement in projects. This finding aligns with the perspective of Asaadmin (2022), who emphasized that program indicators should measure both the process and the outcomes. By doing so, these indicators can help identify what is being done well and areas that need improvement, thus translating to enhanced project performance. The mean value of 1.01 and the low standard deviation of 0.098 indicate a high level of agreement among the respondents, reinforcing the importance of utilizing M&E results for identifying areas of improvement.

Nearly all respondents (99.0%) agreed that applying M&E results effectively enhances project accountability. This is essential as robust M&E systems can provide evidence-based feedback and foster transparency in project implementation, which in turn increases accountability. The mean value of 1.04 and the standard deviation of 0.246 suggest a high level of agreement and a relatively narrow range of responses, indicating a strong consensus among the participants. About 96.6% of respondents agreed that incorporating M&E outcomes drives resource efficiency in projects. This aligns with the perspective of Osberg (2015), who suggested that sustainable financial models and efficient utilization of resources can result from effective M&E systems. By identifying successful strategies and areas of waste, projects can optimize their resource utilization for maximum impact. The mean value of 1.00 and the low standard deviation of 0.069 indicate a high level of agreement and a relatively narrow range of responses, highlighting the importance of M&E in driving resource efficiency.

A near-unanimous majority (99.5%) agreed that utilizing M&E results leads to better decision-making in project management. This high consensus underlines the critical role of M&E in supporting informed and strategic decision-making, which is key to enhancing project performance and achieving desired outcomes. The mean value of 1.02 and the low standard deviation of 0.153 indicate a high level of agreement and a relatively narrow range of responses, emphasizing the importance of M&E in enabling better decision-making. Therefore, it was revealed that application of monitoring and evaluation results have impact on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

The church leaders and donors were asked to comment on the impact of monitoring and evaluation results of performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. The responses they gave are:

*“I have seen firsthand the significant impact the application of monitoring and evaluation results has had on the performance and success of projects. The systematic and continuous collection of data, coupled with periodic evaluations, has provided project teams with crucial insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of their strategies and implementation processes. It has allowed for timely adjustments to be made, ensuring that the projects stay on track and meet their intended objectives. Furthermore, the transparency provided by this rigorous monitoring and evaluation system has increased my confidence as a donor, knowing that the resources are being used optimally. I must say, the success of several projects under this system is a testament to its effectiveness.”* Donor 2 (Interview date: 14/05/2023)

*“I strongly recommend the implementation of robust monitoring and evaluation systems for our projects. These systems play a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of our endeavors. By consistently collecting and analyzing data, we can track progress, identify challenges early, and make necessary adjustments. This not only ensures the successful completion of projects but also assures our donors that their funds are being put to the best possible use. Furthermore, such systems will enhance our accountability and transparency, thereby strengthening the trust and confidence of our stakeholders. The success of our projects is directly tied to the efficacy of our monitoring and evaluation systems. Let's embrace them wholeheartedly.”*  
Church leader 3 (Interview date: 13/05/2023)

This indicates that the application of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) results has a significant impact on project performance and success, as witnessed by the donor's first-hand experience. The systematic collection of data and periodic evaluations provide crucial insights, allowing for timely adjustments and ensuring that projects stay on track to meet their objectives. This assertion resonates with Bullen & Bullen, (2022) who concluded that the first step to creating an M&E plan is to identify the program goals and objectives. The transparency provided by rigorous M&E systems enhances donor confidence by assuring them that resources are being used optimally. Similarly, the church leader's strong recommendation for robust M&E systems highlights their pivotal role in enhancing project effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. The success of projects is directly tied to the efficacy of monitoring and evaluation processes, emphasizing the importance of embracing these systems wholeheartedly. Overall, these perspectives emphasize the transformative power of M&E in driving project success and stakeholder satisfaction.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter delves into the extensive findings of the study, taking into account the problem statement, relevant literature, hypotheses, and conceptual framework. The presentation of the study's fundamental objectives is clear and properly articulated. Visual aids, such as tables, have been employed to illustrate the findings, which are supported by relevant statistical analysis. Moving forward, the subsequent section highlights the key findings and conclusions derived from the results and discussions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### Overview of the Study

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects funded by Freshfire Church International, Ghana. To accomplish this objective, a mixed-method research design was employed, allowing for the integration of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This approach was chosen to enhance the validity of the findings by cross-verifying the data collected from multiple sources. From a population of 710 individuals, a sample size of 209 was selected, consisting of church leaders, donors, and stakeholders affiliated with Freshfire Church International. The chosen participants were actively involved throughout the research process, ensuring their contribution and engagement. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and interview guides, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Statistical tools, including descriptive analysis, mean, and standard deviation, were employed to analyze the gathered data. The results of the analysis were presented in tabular form, providing a clear and organized presentation of the findings.

#### Summary of Research Findings

The primary objective of this research was to assess the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation planning on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International, and the key findings were that:

1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process are integral to the design and implementation of projects funded by FreshFire Church International in Ghana.

2. The dominant method used for M&E process is surveys or questionnaires. This suggests that this method is considered effective within the context of these projects and maybe a standard part of the M&E processes.
3. The frequency of M&E activities indicated that M&E activities are conducted once a year, suggesting that this is the standard practice.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation processes typically involve self-reporting by project staff for data collection, formal written reports for communicating feedback, and the recognition of project achievements and successes as a key element in the reports.

The second objective was to assess the impact of Stakeholder competency in (M&E) on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International, and the major findings are that:

1. Stakeholder competency in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has a substantial impact on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. Stakeholder competency significantly aids in revealing the strengths and weaknesses of these projects.
2. Stakeholder competency in M&E provides a significant role in effective decision-making for project improvements. This finding underscores the importance of stakeholder competency in M&E in the decision-making process, particularly when it comes to making improvements to the projects funded by FreshFire Church International.
3. Stakeholder competency in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) significantly enhances project accountability and transparency. This finding implies that investments in improving stakeholder competency in M&E could substantially increase accountability and transparency in projects funded by FreshFire

Church International, which may help to build trust and credibility with project beneficiaries, donors, and other stakeholders.

4. The research also reveals an overwhelmingly positive perception of the role of stakeholder competency in M&E in ensuring the effective utilization of project resources. This finding strongly suggests that enhancing stakeholder competency in M&E is essential for optimizing resource utilization in projects funded by FreshFire Church International, which could lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness in project implementation.

The final objective established the impact of the application of (M&E) results on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. The key findings are:

1. The application of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) outcomes significantly impacts the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.
2. The application of M&E results is instrumental in identifying areas for improvement in projects. This consensus among respondents reinforces the role of M&E in highlighting aspects that need enhancement, thereby aiding in the overall improvement of project performance.
3. The application of M&E results improves the accountability of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.
4. The data indicated suggests that incorporating M&E results drives resource efficiency in projects. This finding further strengthens the understanding of the critical role M&E plays in ensuring efficient resource utilization.

## Conclusions

The research findings indicate that the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International is significantly influenced by the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The M&E system adheres to established best practices, encompassing regular monitoring, comprehensive evaluations, and effective feedback mechanisms (Tengan and Aigbavboa, 2017). Regarding the efficacy of the M&E system, it was determined that the system played a pivotal role in identifying and addressing capacity gaps within the project teams, thereby resulting in enhanced project performance. Moreover, the M&E system assumed a critical function in promoting accountability and facilitating informed decision-making processes. In summary, the utilization of M&E outcomes emerged as a crucial element contributing to the success of project performance. Additionally, the research discovered a generally favorable perception of the M&E system among the project teams.

## Recommendations

The study's results and conclusions led to the following recommendations:

To enhance the handling of feedback and discussions regarding monitoring and evaluation results, it would be advantageous to establish multiple committees at various project levels. This approach would provide a holistic comprehension of the outcomes and facilitate a comprehensive review of project performance. Moreover, conducting these evaluations at the project level would guarantee that projects are assessed in alignment with their specific objectives and assigned tasks. Subsequently, a meticulous report can be compiled, which can be subsequently shared with senior management within the organization to inform decision-making processes. This approach fosters a collaborative environment where evaluators and project stakeholders are acquainted

with one another, ensuring that accomplishments are duly acknowledged and validated by all parties involved.

It is crucial to tackle the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems in identifying opportunities for project enhancement, especially for projects that have lower success rates. The data patterns revealed that projects with higher performance exhibited greater alignment with the utilization of these systems. Furthermore, additional incentives and rewards could be implemented to recognize exceptional projects. This approach would serve as a motivational factor, encouraging project teams to excel and demonstrate heightened dedication to their assigned tasks. Moreover, such a strategy would foster healthy competition among projects, promoting active participation in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Emphasizing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems in capacity building for project staff is essential, particularly considering that the majority of staff members did not perceive these systems as instrumental in their professional development. This underscores the significance of a robust feedback mechanism. When staff members are made aware of the evaluation outcomes, they gain a clearer understanding of the areas where they can improve and are motivated to invest more effort in self-improvement. By prioritizing the feedback process, project teams can cultivate a stronger sense of personal growth and drive to enhance their skills and knowledge.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Future studies should examine how monitoring and assessment procedures affect the outcomes of initiatives supported by different religious institutions. This would offer a broader perspective on the effectiveness of these systems across diverse

religious organizations. Additionally, studies could focus on the specific components of monitoring and evaluation systems that contribute to the most significant improvements in project performance. This would help to pinpoint the most critical factors to consider when implementing these systems.

Another area for further research could be the exploration of the impact of different types of incentives on the commitment of project teams to their tasks. This could provide valuable insights into how to motivate project teams to excel. Moreover, research could be conducted on the effectiveness of different feedback mechanisms in monitoring and evaluation systems. This could include investigating how the frequency, format, and content of feedback influence the performance of project teams.

Lastly, further studies could delve into the potential of monitoring and evaluation systems in capacity building for other churches within Ghana. This could involve exploring the most effective ways to use these systems to enhance the skills and competencies of capacity building amongst beneficiaries of projects funded by faith based organisations. Exploring these recommended avenues for further investigation has the potential to make a substantial contribution towards enhancing comprehension and advancement in the realm of monitoring and evaluation systems' influence on the performance of projects financed by faith-based organizations.

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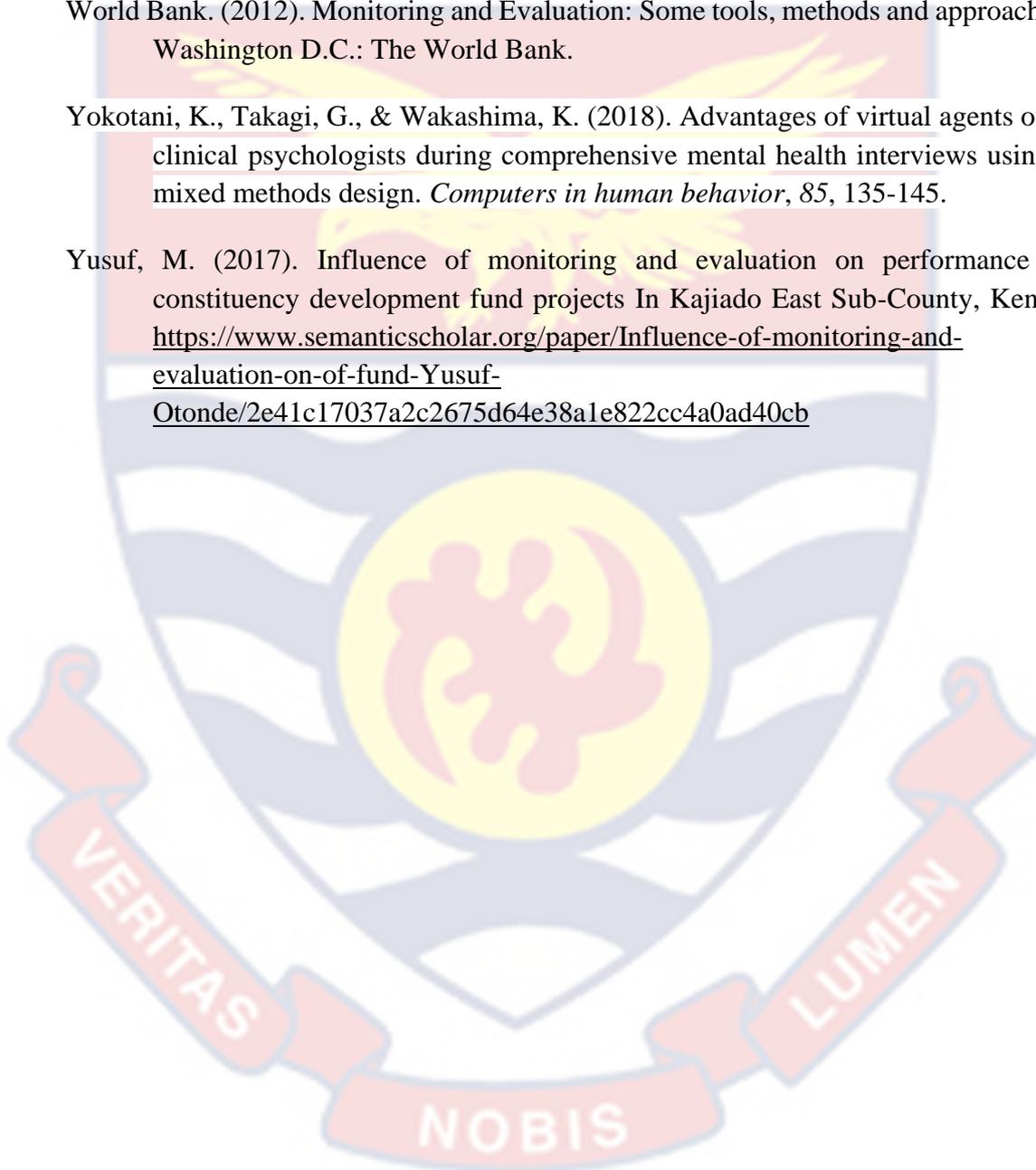
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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

The purpose of this survey is to assess the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations, with a specific focus on Freshfire Church International in Ghana. This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for obtaining a Master's Degree from Christian Service University College. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and all responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

The questionnaire is divided into sections that aim to gather information about your background as a church member, Freshfire Church International's use of monitoring and evaluation systems, your perceptions of the impact of monitoring and evaluation planning, stakeholder competency, and the application of monitoring and evaluation results on project performance.

Please kindly indicate your response by ticking (√) the appropriate box for each question. Your participation in this survey will greatly contribute to the understanding of how monitoring and evaluation systems can enhance the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations.

Thank you for your valuable time and contribution.

**Section I: Background characteristics of respondents**

1. Gender: [1] Male [2] Female
2. Age (years): [1] Less than 20      [2] 20 - 29      [3] 30 - 39      [4] More than 39
3. Designation: [1] Church Member      [2] Project Member      [3] Donor
4. Rank:      [1] Church Leader      [2] Church Staff      [3] Project Manager
5. Number of years associated with Freshfire Church International:      [1] 0 – 5      [2] 6 and above

**Section 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Process**

6. Were monitoring and evaluation activities conducted for projects funded by Freshfire Church International in Ghana?  
[1] Yes      [2] No

7. What methods were used for monitoring and evaluation? (Select all that apply)

- [1] Document review
- [2] Interviews with project stakeholders
- [3] Surveys/questionnaires
- [4] Site visits/field observations

8. How often were monitoring and evaluation activities conducted for the projects?

- [1] Once a year
- [2] Twice a year
- [3] Irregular

9. What methods were used to collect monitoring and evaluation data? (Select all that apply)

- [1] Self-reporting by project staff
- [2] Data collection from beneficiaries/end-users
- [3] Data collection from community members
- [4] Review of project deliverables/document

10. How was the feedback from monitoring and evaluation activities communicated to project stakeholders?

- [1] Formal written report
- [2] Formal verbal presentation/meeting
- [3] Informal written report
- [4] Informal verbal communication/discussion

11. What did the monitoring and evaluation reports contain? (Select all that apply)

- [1] Identified areas of improvement
- [2] Recognized project achievements/successes
- [3] Recommended future actions or adjustments
- [4] Suggested next steps for the project

**Section 3: Impact of Stakeholder Competency in Monitoring and Evaluation**

12. Please rate the level of impact of stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International.

Use the scale below to rate each statement: 1 = Low Impact      2 = Moderate

Impact      3 = High Impact

Level of Impact	1	2	3
a) Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation effectively identifies the strengths and weaknesses of projects.			
b) Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation enables effective decision-making for project improvements.			
c) Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation enhances project accountability and transparency.			
d) Stakeholder competency in monitoring and evaluation ensures effective utilization of project resources.			

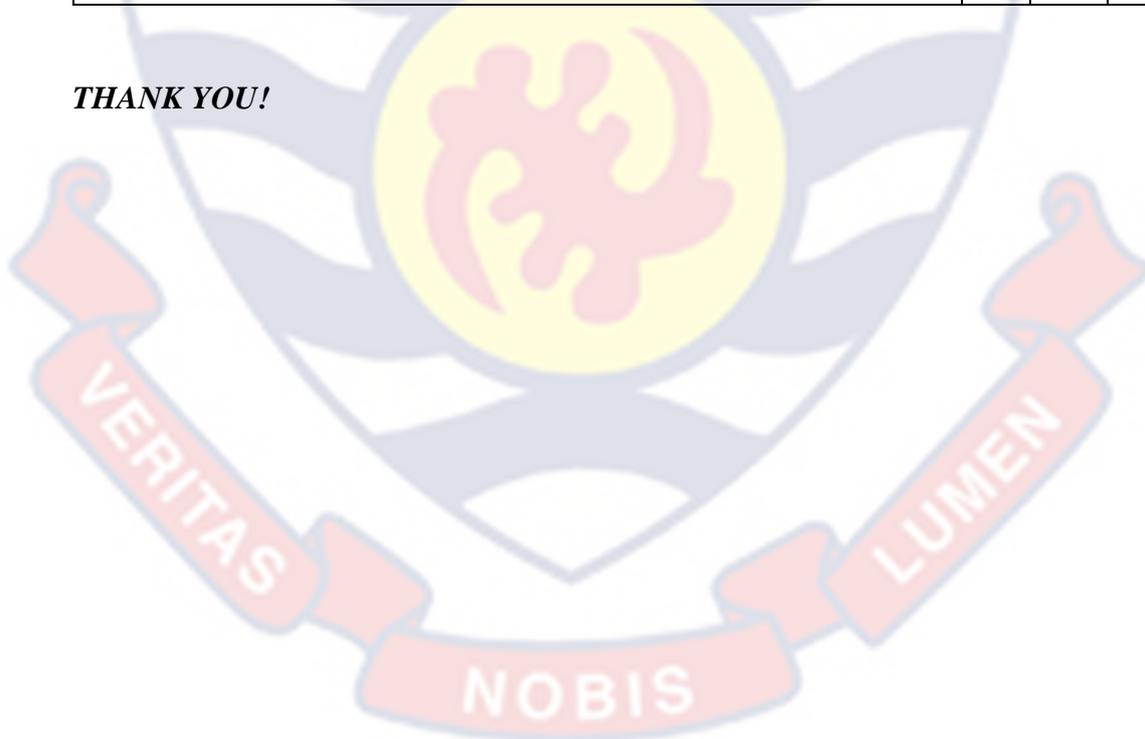
**Section 4: Impact of the Application of Monitoring and Evaluation Results**

13. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the application of monitoring and evaluation results on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. Use the scale below to rate each statement:

1 = Agree                      2 = Undecided                      3 = Disagree

<b>M &amp;E Application</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
a) The application of monitoring and evaluation results contributes to the overall success of projects.			
b) The application of monitoring and evaluation results helps identify areas for improvement in projects.			
c) The application of monitoring and evaluation results enhances the accountability of project implementation.			
d) The application of monitoring and evaluation results ensures the efficient use of project resources.			
e) The application of monitoring and evaluation results leads to better decision-making in project management.			

**THANK YOU!**



**APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CHURCH LEADERS AND DONORS**

Dear Sir/Madam,

This interview guide is designed to assess the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations, specifically FreshFire Church International in Ghana. This research is being conducted as part of a Master's Degree program, and all information provided will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

1. How does FreshFire Church International plan and establish monitoring and evaluation systems for funded projects?

.....  
.....

2. How are the performance standards and indicators determined for these projects?

.....  
.....

3. What methods or tools are used to assess the performance of funded projects?

.....  
.....

4. How is feedback on the monitoring and evaluation results communicated to the church leaders and staff involved in the projects?

.....  
.....

5. Is there a process for discussing the monitoring and evaluation results with the church leaders and staff personally? If not, what alternative processes are adopted?

.....  
.....

6. In your opinion, how has the application of monitoring and evaluation results contributed to the overall performance and success of projects funded by FreshFire Church International?

.....  
.....

7. Can you provide any additional information or insights regarding the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects funded by faith-based organizations?

.....  
.....

Please feel free to share your experiences, perspectives, and any relevant information related to the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the performance of projects funded by FreshFire Church International. Your inputs are valuable for this study.

*Thank you for your time and participation.*

