

**DETERMINANTS OF SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE**

**AN ENQUIRY INTO PROJECT PRACTITIONERS'  
UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCES WITH  
HIV AND AIDS PROJECTS IN THE SADC REGION**

***DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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**BY**

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*To my wife and children;*

*To all people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS; and*

*To all those tirelessly working to control HIV and AIDS*

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Constructivism:** A way of thinking which recognizes that meaning is not given but constructed through processes of investigation, engagement, dialogue and collective consensus.

**Emergence:** Unexpected and often unforeseen transition that occurs in a system during the course of a planned event, action or process producing a new set of patterns of behaviour

**Mess:** Is a big problem situation that is complex or not easy to solve, often associated with several other problems. The problem has far reaching effects, costly and time consuming to address and often involving various players who may see and understand the world very differently in terms of their religious, political, scientific, economic, cultural and social orientations.

**System:** A purposeful assembly or group of interacting components (subsystems) such that the behaviour of the components is influenced by being in the system. The system conserves some identifiable set of relations with the sum of the components plus their relations to other entities (other systems). The system has a defined boundary which can be expanded to accommodate other components as the situation may require.

**Systems thinking:** An approach to life or way of thinking and understanding that emphasizes holistic view of the relationships between phenomena and processes as opposed to seeking to understand phenomena on the basis of individual or restricted view point.

**Paradigm:** A very general world view based on a set of fundamental philosophical assumptions that define the nature of interaction between human beings and their environment.

**Project:** A planned and structured, often unique process, usually a component of a programme targeted to a geographic area or community to achieve specific objectives and outputs to address specific social and economic needs or issues within limited resources and timeframe

**Programme:** A planned and structured process, often long term, comprising a number of related interventions or projects targeted at a geographic area or community to achieve a major goal within a period of time. The programme mobilizes resources through projects as the need arise.

**Performance:** A planned and pragmatic qualitative or quantitative measurement or estimate of the extent to which specific objectives are achieved and the level of effectiveness and efficiency in relation to time, effort and resources employed. The measurement is often multi-dimensional, encompassing all many aspects such as process management, delivery of outputs or milestones, use of resources, timeliness, etc, measured against a plan. Measurement is established on the basis of feedback from regular monitoring and evaluation of effort.

**Social development projects:** In the context of this study, these are projects aimed at addressing issues and problems driven by human interaction and relationships, often characterized by diversity, complexity and mess such as HIV and AIDS. The products are often intangible. They are unpredictable, difficult to define and quantify and often require involvement and reconciling people from different socio-cultural, economic and political orientations to address them. These projects are different from hard product related projects such as those in engineering which can be manipulated and quantified.

**Sustainability:** In the language of this study, the term refers to the process of ensuring that any initiatives to improve the status quo or bring about development is facilitated in ways that does not bring about any harm or compromise the well being, aspirations or status of human beings and the environment, intentionally or unintentionally in the present and the future.

**Conscious experiencing of existence:** In the context of this study, this is the process in which human decisions, actions or behaviours are informed by reflective thought processes and a holistic consciousness of the consequences of those decisions, actions or behaviour that is built on learning from experiences and social consensus to safeguard the rights, dignity and well-being of all human beings.

**Non-linear:** There is no proportionality between cause and effect. Change is seen in terms of adaptive co-evolution where each organization is an active agent which both

influences and is influenced by the social ecosystem. As a result, many alternative solutions are possible for a given system

**Self organization:** a process in which informal, more often temporary teams form spontaneously around issues for example networks

## ABSTRACT

HIV and AIDS projects do not appear to be making significant impact to date as shown by the continued rise in HIV infection and complexity of HIV and AIDS related problems in Southern Africa (UNAIDS 2004). The general understanding of what is required to turn HIV and AIDS projects into successfully performing systems is rather weak. Koskela and Howell (2002) observe that the underlying theory of project management is obsolete and project management lacks theoretical capacity to deal with the need to improve its practice. Using an introspective qualitative methodology to solicit responses from 15 project practitioners drawn purposively- random from 5 countries of Southern Africa and in addition to referencing project literature from organizations working on HIV and AIDS control as well as observations from workshops, the study draws conclusions of a formative nature, on what determines the performance of HIV and AIDS projects. These determinants include: availability of adequate resources; quality of planning; creativity of project teams; timeliness in implementation; quality of leadership and management; competence of project leaders or managers; the social, political, economic environment in which the project is implemented; theoretical or paradigmatic relevance of project designs and implementation methodologies; quality of monitoring and evaluation; motivation of project teams and beneficiaries; participation of beneficiaries and stakeholders; and multisectorality of project efforts. The study suggests that social development project designs appear to suffer from paradigmatic mismatch and in-congruency, employing project design frameworks and methodologies borrowed from physical science projects, with a strong mechanistic, positivist character to address “messy situations” (Ackoff, 1974; Casti, 1994; Eden, et al, 1983 & Lane, et al, 2000). Recognising that the use of projects is becoming more pervasive, with more managers entering the field of project management, the study notes that the success of project practitioners depends on their ability to adopt multiple skills and adapt to complex situations, “quickly and accurately facilitating problem solving and decision making processes” (Burke, 1999). The study recognizes that project management in HIV and AIDS is guided by reductionist and mechanistic metaphors which defines the mechanistic character of project designs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The development and application of systemic metaphors could improve project management practice in social development efforts. The study provides recommendations for improving sustainable project management practice, most importantly, the use of systems thinking and approach as an alternative theoretical and paradigmatic foundation for addressing complex social development project management efforts such as HIV and AIDS control. The researcher acknowledges that systems approaches provide opportunities for social dialogue and collective consensus, reflective thinking and practice and experiential learning which are necessary to improving performance of complex social development efforts in unpredictable environments, with potential to achieving “the common good”.

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The increasing complexities of the modern world has brought challenges to humanity that requires experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), better knowledge, management and leadership by those at the centre of decision making of social development efforts in order to maintain some level of social stability and a better life to all humankind.

Although the world has increasingly become technologically advanced over the past few decades and more resources made available for charity and the so called “development” agenda, ironically, the number of people living in abject poverty and disease continues to rise in the majority of countries in Southern Africa (UNAIDS2002, 2004).

HIV and AIDS projects do not appear to be making significant impact as exemplified by the continued rise in HIV infection and complexity of HIV and AIDS related problems in Southern Africa (UNAIDS 2004). The general understanding of what is required to turn HIV and AIDS projects into successfully performing systems is rather weak and most projects continue to be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated as mechanistic, isolated and individualized entities. Koskela and Howell (2002) observe that the underlying theory of project management is obsolete; project management lacks theoretical capacity to deal with the need to improve its practice. There is no clear theoretical and paradigmatic guidance on what generally determines project performance within and across organizations and HIV and AIDS control efforts.

In the field of HIV and AIDS, there is a general lack of institutional capacity to use monitoring and evaluation information for decision making purposes. The level of understanding monitoring and evaluation is rather shallow. There is a huge gap between talking about monitoring and evaluation and implementing it effectively. Monitoring and evaluation is thought of as an event mostly to establish the impact of the project at the end. Efforts to collate monitoring and evaluation information at national levels are weak and Heads of national AIDS authorities in most of the SADC Member States complain

that most of the organizations working on HIV and AIDS control in their countries are reluctant to provide them with monitoring and evaluation information that they would require to report holistically on the performance of all national efforts

Social development, in particular HIV and AIDS projects are not Win/Win in design (Covey, 1989, 1991). They are didactic and based on methodology than results. For example, behavior change communication programmes emphasize on telling and teaching people how to change their behaviours instead of asking people how they can change their behaviours, emphasizing results and benefits for the individual.

Social development project designs and evaluations appear to suffer from paradigmatic mismatch and in-congruency, employing reductionist design frameworks and methodologies borrowed from physical science projects, with a strong mechanistic, positivist character to address messy and systemic problems such as HIV and AIDS, Ackoff (1974); Casti (1994); Eden, et al, (1983) & Lane, et al, (2000). Jackson (1995) recognizes that management science has not given much thought on how to deal with diverging and conflicting situations in which there is less harmony.

As the use of projects become more pervasive, more managers are entering the field of project management. Their success depends on their ability to develop fully integrated information and control systems to plan, instruct, monitor and control large amounts of data, quickly and accurately facilitate problem solving and decision making processes (Burke, 1999). Burke recognizes that projects have traditionally been managed through a classic functional hierarchical type organization structure. With the increase of multi-disciplinarity; multi-departments; multi-companies and multi-national projects; multi-sectoral approaches to addressing complex problems such as HIV and AIDS, so there has been a move towards management-by-projects, project teams and matrix organizational structures (ibid).

Field observations suggest that in practice, there is often a mismatch between the theory and assumptions of the project design and that of the monitoring and evaluation system

used to establish and measure performance of the project. Monitoring visits are often irregular and sometimes resulting in remedial actions to project implementation processes being taken late, largely in retrospect rather than proactive. Evaluation tends to be considered as an ‘add on’ task rather than having to be built as an inherent behavior function of the project design framework from the onset. When evaluations are conducted, the objective is inclined more to tracking resources and timeliness of the project more than the potential of the project processes to benefit communities. The use of evaluations is limited to a few stakeholders largely the donors, and seldom are the results communicated to local community stakeholders and used to improve project processes.

The ways in which evaluations of HIV and AIDS projects are defined, conducted and used vary between organizations. It would appear that there is no common understanding in measuring performance of interventions in current social development approaches. Different organizations appear to have their different interpretations of success and failure, as Jackson (1995) observes, “any attempt to intervene in an organization will have effects on the organization whether the intervention is deemed successful or not...there is a good possibility that some individuals and groups will benefit while others will lose”. Project performance evaluations should reflect upon the ethics of the intervention in the light of an assessment of who benefits. In addition, perspectives and worldviews influence people’s perceptions of performance, for example “the same information structured differently, has different meaning” (Laurillard, 1993).

There is also a tendency to develop and use “blue prints” or models for responding to HIV and AIDS, developed by international organizations such as the United Nations into “one size fits all” without building adequate capacity to adapt them to local context relevancy. Jackson warns against the temptation to make the same prescriptions or try the same method out again and again because it worked before. According to him, applying such “blue prints” in circumstances where they do not work can have disastrous results. Lorsch (1979) also warns against the lure of universal theory and argues instead

for the potential of situational theories. This perspective is supported by Jones (1993)<sup>1</sup> who indicates that there can never be any single correct solution for any management problem, or an all embracing system which will carry one through a particular situation or period of time. The skill of the manager consists of knowing them all, and choosing the particular ideas which are most appropriate for the position and time in which he finds himself. Relating this to a seed, Jackson highlights that “there are so many unforeseen circumstances that affect the potential of the seed to germinate, grow healthy, pollinate and produce fruits and be harvested. Through out the process, one needs to be flexible and provide tender care as emerging and required” (Jackson, 1995).

In the same vein social development ‘experts’ need to recognize that there is no one solution to all management problems. There are various ways of tackling and resolving problems depending with the context in question, Stake (1996b); Jackson (1999); Zadek, (1994); Flood (1999). Systems thinking recognizes this complexity. The trick according to Jackson, is to give up the attempt to mathematically model the variables that are on the surface and dig beneath the surface to find out the important design features you must have in systems if they are to be effective over time, remaining viable because they are capable of adapting and self regulating in turbulent environments.

Project practitioners continue to use total quality management (TQM) widely in its original character despite its rigidity and some of its aspects being outdated. Jackson notes that while there are many different methodologies recommended for implementing quality, “we don’t really know how to bring about a quality culture and make it stick”. As a result, “quality programs fizzle out”. There is a neglect of the politics of quality and little recognition that quality interventions can lead to some groups benefiting and others suffering. This problem is also identified by Ackoff (1992) who quotes Drucker as saying “we spend a great deal more time trying to do things right rather than trying to do the right things’.

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<sup>1</sup> In Jackson (1995)

In a bid to improve on TQM “systems thinking has considered how to design organizations as complex adaptive systems in such a way as to allow individuals to take on the responsibilities required of them by TQM while at the same time, permitting management to feel in control. It has devoted time to discovering means of achieving agreements and commitments and bringing about shared values and philosophies, so that it could help a quality culture become established. It has begun to think about how to handle the political dimension in organizations” Jackson (1999).

Most HIV and AIDS projects are donor driven, designed and evaluated by external consultants with sometimes rigid perspectives and worldviews that are influenced by their own cultures and contexts which are different from those evaluated or served by the projects. Often, this creates problems of validity and reliability (Cresswell, 1994, 2003; Durrheim and Blanche, 1999) relative to evaluations. According to Flood (1996) there is a difference between what the ‘program people’ want to know about their program and what ‘outsiders’ want to know. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), evaluation frameworks must take into consideration the power relations that may exist and pressurize the evaluator within the evaluation process. These power structures not only affect the relationships between those being evaluated, but also limit the practical ability of the evaluator to be a neutral outsider. An evaluation framework should also provide for understanding the plurality of value-bases existing simultaneously within the evaluation process, as well as multiple interests, agendas, perceptions and perspectives.

Taking an ethical perspective to project management, Cronbach and his colleagues (1980) argue that the credibility of project evaluation studies lies in profession-wide arrangements that ensure the evaluator’s freedom to be honest, not in the inherent objectivity of the external review. Cross-validation of studies akin to that conducted in the physical sciences is a better way to obtain objectivity than by depending on the dogma of external evaluation. This argument is also supported by Flood (1999) who suggests triangulation of methods in an attempt to overcome the deficiencies of any one approach to evaluation by combining a number of them and capitalizing on their respective strengths. Evaluation should proceed in such a way that the process followed,

“is recoverable by anyone interested in subjecting the work to critical scrutiny”, (Checkland and Howell, 1998)<sup>2</sup>. This means documenting the thought processes and models that enabled people to do their work and to draw their conclusions.

A new way of thinking and approach is required to improve the delivery of social development initiatives such as HIV and AIDS projects. According to Jackson (1995), the choice of methodology determines social outcomes. In addition it is necessary, to reflect on how the cultural or political aspects of a situation can constrain the choice of method.

The research proposes the use of systems thinking as an alternative to the profession and practice of project management. According to Jackson (1995) “...systems ideas provide the surest foundation for management practice. It is not just for managers, but carries the hope of bringing about improvements in organizations and societies which can benefit all stakeholders”. It provides opportunities for achieving collective consensus for achieving the common good.

A holistic and inclusive approach to project management is also echoed by Flood (1999) who proposes systemic evaluations, characterized by facilitating of learning and understanding about the impact of projects and seeking to enhance the positive impact of the projects by dealing with the counter-intuitive consequences. He argues for a constructivist approach to project management, which recognizes that evaluation is not about collecting data, but a product of a process of investigation and construction of meaning.

Jackson (1995) shares the same view when he argues that “taking a systems approach to solving problems means looking at problem situations holistically, as wholes, rather than reducing problem situations to their parts and seeking to understanding them, and engage them on the basis of their parts. The most interesting and important problems for

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<sup>2</sup> In Flood (1999)

managers arise when the parts interact and produce emergent properties which are not related to the parts themselves”.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

*“If you do not know what your theories are you cannot explain your knowledge and pass it on to the next generation. If you do not have a theoretical check then you cannot appreciate that the methods you use might be working for the wrong reasons –perhaps because they appeal to the powerful and lend themselves to authoritarian usage”, (Jackson 1995).*

The **assumption** of this study is that there is so much scope to improve project management as a profession and ensure that it delivers practical and positive changes and improvement in people’s lives. Underlying this assumption is the researcher’s perception that project management, particularly as it relates to complex social development challenges such as HIV and AIDS, is a relatively new subject in both academic and practitioners’ efforts to create a just world in which all human beings have their basic survival needs fulfilled and sustained. In addition, project management, grounded in systems thinking, can be a vehicle for achieving the “common good” through processes of constructing and establishing “collective consensus” and “conscious experiencing of existence”, some kind of reflective learning and action. In this regard, the researcher seeks to contribute knowledge to project management practice.

### **1.2.1 Systems Thinking a paradigm and methodology**

Critical systems thinking is characterized by critical awareness (of strengths and weaknesses); emancipation; social awareness; complementarism at the methodological level; complementarism at the level of theory and the ethical stance. It hinges on what the researcher calls *conscious experiencing of existence*, a form of critical reflection on action or learning, “thinking about our own thinking...the mind’s conversation with itself...such that we become more aware of the interrelationships between our existing ideas and actions and their values for us...and able to change and adapt our ideas and understandings to take into account new learning...critical analysis of ideas and

experiences”, (Lane and Thorpe, 2000). This embodies (a) awareness of self or group actions and implications (b) awareness of one’s existence and relationships with others and building this awareness into one’s decisions and actions (c) complementarity (d) consensus building and sense making which allows for decisions and actions to be taken on the basis of the common good, (Midgley, 1996; Schechter, 1991; Flood and Jackson, 1991a).

Zadek (1994) describes systems thinking as striking a balance between two ontological perspectives of constructivism (which seeks to mediate and reach consensus through accommodating different values, worldviews and perspectives) and positivism (which assists in decision making and action by making inference from reality), in order to bridge the construction of meaning with action. It provides opportunities for the project practitioner to engage various stakeholders towards an agreement. In addition, the aims, goals and approaches used to design and deliver projects and the descriptions of the processes themselves, are all determined by stakeholders.

**Paradigms** are defined as systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, and very general worldview based on a set of fundamental philosophical assumptions that define the nature of possible research and intervention (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). Paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation. Paradigms are thus central not only to research design but also to development practice because they impact both on the nature of the research question or problem – i.e. what is to be studied – and on the manner in which the question is to be studied and projects designed or evaluated. According to Jackson (1995), “Reasoned intervention based on theory can help us to learn and reduce costs”.

Systems thinking is not new - it has only been renewed. “Many of the ideas which we today associate with systems thinking, such as rationality, comprehensiveness, human well-being and emancipation, and progress, are closely connected with the notion of ‘enlightenment’ and date back from that period of history known as the Enlightenment,

Immanuel Kant...being the philosopher par excellence”, Jackson (1995). For Kant, in his essay in 1784, enlightenment concerned the release of people from self-incurred tutelage so that they could legislate for themselves – deciding what was true or false and what was good or bad, free from church domination. Chapman views systems thinking as more like history or philosophy – it is an intellectual approach to issues that can range across the whole of human experience. Systems thinking is useful for tackling issues that are embedded in complexity created by human activity. Chapman reiterates that systems approach “values different perspectives precisely because it encourages insights and new approaches to complex issues...and provides a framework for improving messes”.

Ulrich (1983) encourages us to think about our assumptions in making systems judgments and using systems methodologies. We must think about the social consequences when we design systems in particular ways and reflect critically upon the partiality of our systems designs and methods. This notion agrees with the researcher’s proposal for human beings to engage in **conscious experiencing of existence** or **reflection of experiences and actions** to build collective consensus and respect the inherent dignity and human rights of individuals (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), in order to achieve the common good.

Reflective thinking and action is at the heart of **Kolb’s learning cycle**, (Kolb, 1984) which is a key theoretical reference model for this study. The study is aligned to **systems thinking** both as an ontology and epistemology and, in line with Zadek’s thinking, accommodate both constructivism and positivism. Jackson (1995) reminds us that using systems ideas –such as emergence and hierarchy, communication and control – mean that we are trying to model systems in the world, in which case we are giving systems a real ontological status. Other times, and more usually in management context, we are talking about using systems ideas, or systems models constructed out of the ideas and models simply to learn about and clarify different view points on the world, in which case we are using them as an epistemological device. Both approaches can be productive according to the circumstances. This position is also supported by Flood (1999) who promotes

triangulation of methods in an attempt to overcome the deficiencies of any one approach by combining a number of them and capitalizing on their respective strengths.

Another key reference framework for this study is the Project Management Cycle (PMBOK, PMI, IPM). The project cycle suggests that projects go through a staged lifecycle from conceptualization, design, implementation and ending with the handover. The study is built on this understanding and reflects and analyses the project cycle. Details on the project life cycle is provided later in this chapter.

### **1.2.2 HIV and AIDS Project Management as Systems Management**

Roberto (2002) defines a system as a purposeful assembly of components (or subsystems) such that the behavior of the components is influenced by being in the system. The definition is supported by Laszlo and Laszlo (1997) who identify a system “as a group of interacting components (subsystem) that conserves some identifiable set of relations with the sum of the components plus their relations to other entities including other systems”. Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK (1992) **defines a project** as: “...a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service. **Temporary** means that every project has a definite end. **Unique** means that the product or service is different in some distinguishing way from similar products or services”. Following the same thoughts, Turner (1993) defines a project as “...an endeavour in which human, (or machine), material and financial resources are organized in a novel way, to undertake a unique scope of work, of given specification, within constraints of cost and time, so as to deliver beneficial change defined by quantitative and qualitative objectives.”. **Project management** according to PMBOK is “...the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities in order to meet stakeholders’ needs and expectations from a project”. Association of Project Managers body of knowledge (APM bok) defines it as “the most efficient way of introducing change...achieved by:

- a) Defining what has to be accomplished, in terms of time, cost, and various technical and quality performance parameters

- b) Developing a plan to achieve these and then working this plan, ensuring that progress is maintained in line with these objectives
- c) Using appropriate project management techniques and tools to plan, monitor and maintain progress
- d) Employing persons skilled in project management – including normally a project manager – who are given responsibility for introducing the change and are accountable for its successful accomplishment”.

Adding to these definitions, Morris (1997) views project management as a process of integrating everything that needs to be done (typically using a number of special project management techniques) as the project evolves through its life cycle (from concept to handover) in order to meet the project’s objectives. Kerzner (1992), gives a classic management oriented definition which views project management as “...the planning, organizing, directing and control of company resources for relatively short term objective that has been established to complete specific goal or objective”. In this way according to Van Der Walt (1998) project management represents a set of principles, tools and techniques, for the effective management of objective oriented work in the context of a specific unique organizational environment.

Within these definitions is embedded systems characteristics of purposeful assembly of organized effort, skills and materials; boundaries; inclusiveness; involvement of various stakeholders with different perspectives and worldviews, bringing innovative ideas and creativity to create a unique product; setting up of an organized community of individuals and groups of people towards a common agenda. The unique product is not necessarily easy to produce, hence the presumption that the process of producing it is riddled with complexity and difficulties. It’s a mess. It implies that interdependent and interconnected relationships will be developed and managed (planned, organized, coordinated, directed, motivated and controlled) to produce the unique product. Issues of organizational structure and control; effective communication and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) are inherent in these definitions and so are several other concepts of systems thinking. The definitions also imply that a project has defined boundaries and scope (Burke, 2003).

Definition of boundaries entails identifying most relevant aspects of relationships and interrelationships that best describes how the purpose or product will be attained.

Following through the definitions of ‘system’ and ‘project’ above, project management is synonymous with managing systems.

The causes and effects of HIV and AIDS epidemic are diverse and interconnected. Efforts to address the epidemic are also so diverse ranging from prevention, treatment, care and support, stigma reduction, among others. There is clear recognition that HIV and AIDS is more than a health problem. It is a developmental problem which is driven and can be addressed by various socio-economic sectors. For example, the agriculture sector drives the epidemic through promoting migrant labour and separation of families and spouses, poor housing facilities, etc. On the other hand, the sector can contribute to HIV and AIDS mitigation and control by ensuring food security and better nutrition among others. A similar bidirectional relationship can be said of other sectors. It is clear that HIV and AIDS is a complex systemic issue which must be addressed systemically. Managing HIV and AIDS projects is therefore akin to managing systems.

### **1.2.3 Defining and measuring performance**

The Collins English Dictionary (1999) defines performance as “manner or quality of functioning”. The Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants (ACCA) (2001) describes performance measurement as aiming “...to establish how well something or somebody is doing in relation to a planned activity”. An important element in performance measurement is the comparison of actual results against a planning target, which might be a strategic business target, a budget target, or a short term operational target. ACCA suggests that the hierarchy of performance measures of any organization ranges from:

- a) Long-term targets for achievement and short-term operational targets and,
- b) Targets for the organization as a whole and targets for business units, divisions and departments within the organization.

Measuring performance requires understanding factors that are critical to the achievement of those targets (critical success factors). In this case, critical success factors are the few key areas of an activity where things must go right for the organization to flourish. They are of vital importance to the furtherance of the organization's aims, and the organization cannot afford to fall behind in any of these areas. For each critical success factor, there should be a measure of actual performance. This measurement of performance is known as a key performance indicator. Measuring performance in this way will show whether or not the organization is achieving the targets that are critical to its success. For example, "a critical success factor for a company is to achieve a return for its shareholders and to increase their wealth" (ACCA).

An approach to establishing performance measures might therefore be to:

- a) Identify the organization's corporate objectives
- b) Determine the critical success factors at the organizational level, divisional, departmental or other operating level within the organization
- c) Determine a small number of key performance indicators for each factor

These descriptions suggest that performance measurement is more specific and reductionist. A systemic way to viewing performance would be to consider the critical success factors in terms of how they relate to other internal and external conditions that influence the function of the organization. Tools for measuring performance must be systemic, flexible at the same time maintaining consistency, reliability and validity.

Measuring performance by itself has no meaning unless there is comparison either against poor performance (which usually provides no true indication of future or competitive position), or through benchmarking, (Management Accounting, 1996).

**Benchmarking** is defined by ACCA as a systematic analysis of one's performance against that of another organization. The overall objective of benchmarking is to improve performance or achieve competitive advantage by learning from others' experiences and

mistakes, finding best practice and translating this best practice into use in the organization.

To establish performance requires knowledge and skills of supervision and control. Performance should be measured systemically taking cognizant of the various interconnected factors and relationships that are involved in producing it. Covey (1989) argues that traditional authoritarian supervision is a Win/Lose paradigm. If you don't have trust or a common vision of desired results, you tend to hover over, check up on, and direct. Trust isn't there, so you feel as though you have to control people. The problem of poor performance is more often in the system, not in the people ... "if you put good people in bad systems, you get bad results."

According to Covey, **performance agreements or partnership agreements** result in Win/Win situations. These agreements shift the paradigm of productive interaction from vertical to horizontal, from hovering supervision to self-supervision, from positioning to being partners in success. This situation creates a standard against which people can measure their own success. It builds a clear, mutual understanding and commitment regarding expectations surrounding roles and goals and as such, is a tool for managing expectations. It makes all expectations explicit. It is characteristic of systems approach in that it allows for democratic engagement, consultation and dialogue to building mutual understanding and consensus, dynamism, diversity, learning and flexibility in approaches to situations.

Covey identifies the following as principles of Win-Win Performance:

- a) Specify desired results, but don't supervise methods and means
- b) Go heavy on guidelines, light on procedures, so that as circumstances change, people have the flexibility to function, exercising their own initiative
- c) Mention all available resources within the organization as well as outside networks
- d) Involve people in setting the standards or criteria of acceptable and exceptional performance

- e) Maintain trust and use discernment, more than so called objective or quantitative measurements to assess results
- f) Reach an understanding of what positive and negative consequences might follow achieving or failing to achieve desired results
- g) Make sure the performance agreement is reinforced by organizational structure and systems to stand the test of time

In Win/Win performance agreements, consequences become the natural or logical result of performance rather than a reward or punishment arbitrarily handed out by the person in charge. Such a performance measurement arrangement is capacitating and empowering. Covey (1991) notes that, “it is much more enabling to the human spirit to let people judge themselves than to judge them”. In many cases people know in their hearts how things are going much better than the records show. Discernment is often far more accurate than either observation or measurement.

Cronje, et al (2004) observe that a control process in performance management narrows the gap between planned performance and actual performance by setting performance standards in the right places, against which the performance of management, subordinates and resources can be measured. It is therefore essential that any performance management system be integrated with the planning system that gives rise to it. “A performance management system without performance to manage is nonsensical”. The unwritten rule of effective control is that control should not be so complex and expensive that the implementation of the control system becomes more complex than the benefits derived from it. At the same time, a system must not be oversimplified to the extent that the essence of control is lost.

Ideal performance conditions rarely exist in real social development situations. In an unpredictable environment, great ability doesn't always equal high performance unless it is matched with great adaptability. High performers don't merely recognize changing conditions, they take advantage of them, (The Economist, February 26<sup>th</sup> – March 4<sup>th</sup>; February 19<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> 2005)

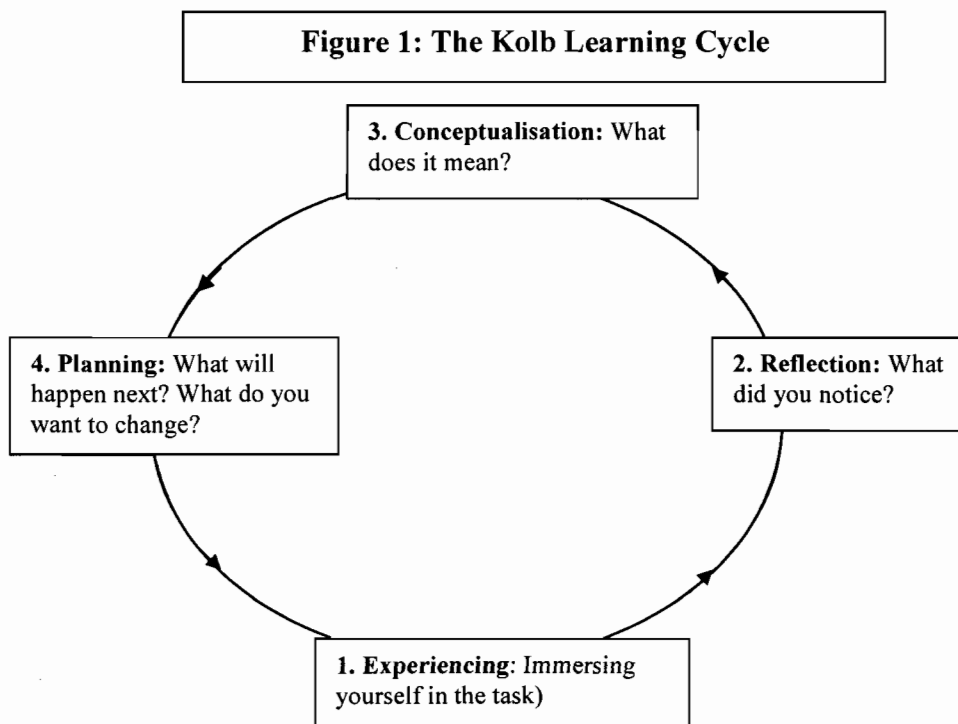
Cronje *ibid* suggest that to make the control process possible and worthwhile, the performance standard should be relevant, realistic, attainable and measurable, so that there can be no doubt whether the actual performance meets the standard or not.

The collection of information and reporting on actual performance are continuous activities. It is also important for the activities to be quantifiable before any valid comparisons can be made; the reports must be absolutely reliable; observation and measurement must be carried out at the necessary strategic points and according to the standards determined by the control system. Important considerations in the measurement and reporting of activities are “what information” and “how much” should be fed back, and “to whom”, Cronje et al (2004).

Effective monitoring keeps a project on track in terms of performance, time and cost. It is important for project practitioners to focus on their plans while acting fast to tackle problems and changes in order to stay on course. Equally important is the need to note that good plans do not result in desired outcomes. Emergence often arises after the plan has been made which often bring in new challenges. According to Bruce and Langdon (2000), “even the best of plans can go awry”.

### 1.2.4 The Kolb Learning Cycle

The Learning Cycle refers to the process by which individuals, teams and organizations attend to and understand their experiences, and consequently modify their behavior. Kolb (1984) defines learning as the creation of knowledge through the transformation of experience. Experiential learning is a recurrent process of adaptation to change, based on a rigorous process of transformation. The failure of many efforts result from making repeated mistakes or inability to learn from experience, (Bawden, 1997), The Learning Cycle (LC) is based on the idea that the more often we reflect on a task, the more often we have the opportunity to modify and refine our efforts.



The Learning Cycle: *Adapted from Kolb (1984) by the Open University*

The Learning Cycle contains the following four stages:

1. **Experiencing** or immersing oneself in the doing of a task is the first stage in which the individual, team or organization simply carries out the task assigned. The engaged person is usually not reflecting on the task at this time, but carrying it out with intention.

2. **Reflection** involves stepping back from task involvement and reviewing what has been done and experienced. The skills of attending, noticing differences, and applying terms helps identify subtle events and communicate them clearly to others. One's paradigm (values, attitudes, beliefs) influences whether one can differentiate certain events. One's vocabulary is also influential, since without words, it is difficult to verbalise and discuss one's perceptions.

3. **Conceptualisation** involves interpreting the events that have been noticed and understanding the relationships among them. It is at this stage that theory may be particularly helpful as a template for framing and explaining events. One's paradigm again influences the interpretive range a person is willing to entertain.

4. **Planning** enables taking the new understanding and translating it into predictions about what is likely to happen next or what actions should be taken to refine the way the task is handled.

Timing of the Learning Cycle is important. If one waits until after a task is completed, there is no opportunity to refine it until a similar task arises.

Project management requires learning at the level of both the Project Manager (Team) and the beneficiaries of the interventions. Social development projects are aimed at transforming the state of affairs from an undesirable (problem) to a desirable (well being) state. Projects transform people and capacitate them to take charge of their lives and well-being. In this regard, understanding and applying the learning cycle is fundamental to influencing successful project management.

### 1.2.5 The Project Life –Cycle

According to PMBOK, "...because projects are unique and involve a certain degree of risk, companies performing projects will generally subdivide their projects into several project phases to provide better management control. Collectively these project phases are called the project life-cycle". There is a general agreement that most projects pass through a four phase life-cycle under the following headings, Burke (1999):

**Concept and Initiation Phase:** Starts the project by establishing a need or opportunity for the product, facility or service. The feasibility of proceeding with the project is investigated and on acceptance of the proposal, moves to the next phase.

**Design and Development Phase:** Uses the guidelines set by the feasibility study to design the product, outline the build-method and develop detailed schedules for making or implementing the product.

**Implementation or Construction Phase:** Implements the project as per the baseline plan developed in the previous phase.

**Commissioning and Handover Phase:** Confirms the project has been implemented or built to the design and terminates the project.

Progression from one stage of the project life-cycle to the other suggests close linkage to the learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). Like the learning cycle, the project cycle according to Burke, "involves some form of technology transfer or handover from one phase to the next phase" p30. It is not necessarily a linear progression process and could some times entail stepping backwards to reflect and tap on previous lessons and experiences. Both the learning cycle and the project cycle suggests some kind of ongoing dialogue and consensus building at individual or group level before moving to the next step. "Fast tracking" or approving thought and action processes without adequate consultation and dialogue and before the last stage is complete or "over-the-wall transfer" (Burke, 1999)

could result in oversight of implications to other interconnected processes with serious consequences. The project as a system evolves from the environment within which it operates, Ackoff (1997). For complex social problems or systems such as HIV and AIDS, this suggests that experiential learning and recognition and management of the pre-project environment are the key for the project's survival in a changing world.

The phases or stages of the project life-cycle can be further subdivided into an input, process and output format. This subdivision helps to identify, understand and measure patterns and trends of performance through out the project life cycle. The project life-cycle can also be subdivided into subsystems along the lines of stakeholders, designers, contractors and suppliers with each having their own four phase project life-cycle that integrates with the client's project life cycle. While the phases are described sequentially, in reality, there may be some overlap between them.

The project life-cycle is often presented with its associated level of effort, most commonly expressed in time spent or costs. The accumulated expenditure profile clearly shows a slow build-up of effort during the initial phases as the project is being designed and developed and accelerates during the implementation phase to a maximum as the work faces are opened-up, before a sharp decline as the work is completed and commissioned and the project draws to a close. Burke warns against following this classic pattern, arguing that more effort should be expended on the front –end of the project where the design and development decisions are made because, “the initial phases offer the greatest potential to add value”. This implies that project practitioners should spend proportionally more time and effort during the initial phases to get the design right before implementation because the opportunities for improving performance and results on all types of projects are at the front-end.

Burke cautions against a simplistic classic view of the project life-cycle as a linear process from concept and handover, and recommends projects to be also viewed from the client's perspective which takes into account the efficient operation of the facility and the return on investment. To look at the wider picture, Burke proposes the use of the term

“product life-cycle”, arguing that “this view highlights why decisions made during the initial phases can have a large impact during later phases even though they may be many years away and the facility may be operated by another company”. The product life-cycle has 8 phases as follows: a) pre-product phase b) conceptualization c) design and development d) implementation e) handover f) operation g) maintenance h) up-grade or expansion. All the phases that come after project handover should be planned for during the project design.

A close review of the problems and theoretical issues in this chapter show that current efforts to deliver HIV and AIDS projects face diverse challenges, ranging from inadequate skills and competence at individual and organizational levels to complex issues such as the absence of a theoretical or paradigmatic foundation. There is currently no harmony in the way HIV and AIDS projects are thought through, designed, executed and monitored and evaluated. There is a need to find new ways of designing, driving and evaluating social development initiatives in ways that are more effective and sustainable.

While it has its own critics, the researcher firmly believe that systems thinking, with its emphasis on holism, constructivism, interconnectedness, partnerships, flexibility and adaptation, accommodating diversity and emergence, among other related principles, offers a solid theoretical, methodological and paradigmatic alternative to project management. In a way, systems thinking appear to be a meta-paradigm that recognizes and seeks to maximize on the strengths of the various paradigmatic orientations such as positivism, constructivism and phenomenology among others. Learning is an integral part of systems approach. It is for this and other related reasons that this study has embraced systems approach and the learning cycle as key to seeking better understanding of factors that determine the performance of HIV and AIDS in the SADC region. It would appear that a systems approach to project management provides opportunities for project practitioners to have a holistic view of complex social development problems and identifying better options to effectively deliver sustainable project efforts.

## CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is “a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” Blanche & Durrheim (1999). It is “architectural blue print, fixed and specified in advance of execution and defined by technical considerations...in accordance with scientific principles to ensure that the findings will stand against criticism” (Bickman et al, 1998) define research designs as plans that guide the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

It is the designed and planned nature of observation that distinguishes research from other forms of observation. The aim of a research design according to Mouton and Marais (1990)<sup>3</sup>, is to plan and structure a given research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximized. Research designs are guided by the principles of design validity and coherence”.

### 2.1 Purpose of the Study

According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999), the purpose of a research project is reflected in the types of conclusions the researcher aims to draw or the goals of the research. The **Purpose of this study** is to identify and describe factors that determine the performance of HIV and AIDS projects based on the experiences and perspectives of project practitioners. The study was conducted among project practitioners working on HIV and AIDS prevention projects of selected not-for-profit organizations or institutions in selected countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

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<sup>3</sup> In Blanche and Durrheim (1999)

According to Jackson, “it is necessary to engage in careful and considered research, both theoretical and empirical, if we are to produce results of real use to managers. ...such research is more in evidence in the recent development of systems thinking and management science”.

In this study, the researcher has drawn on lessons and his experiences in project management and therefore has been both a subject as well as facilitator of the study, as according to McNiff (2000) “my work is not a thing separate from me”.

The study is largely qualitative, exploratory and to some extent explanatory, “... resulting in a phenomenological description of themes and patterns” (Blanche and Durheim, 1999) of project practitioners’ perceptions and experiences with project performance.

One of the intentions of the study was to build on a definition of project performance based on the perceptions and interpretations of project practitioners. An advance definition of performance was given as, **a measurement or description of success or failure of a planned intervention or set of interventions to fulfill a stated intention or target and make changes that are seen to benefit the people or situation targeted by the intervention or set of interventions over a period of time.** This definition was enriched and refined through responses in this study as shown in chapter 3, “Measuring performance of HIV and AIDS projects” “to fit logically within systems thinking as a paradigm associated with constructivism as an ontology, Cresswell (1994).

The researcher makes recommendations for improving leadership and management of HIV and AIDS projects as social development systems in the SADC region and hopes that project practitioners and academia will find it a useful contribution to informing better practice in management of social development efforts.

## **2.2 The Research Questions**

The key questions answered by this study are:

- 1) How is a project and project performance defined by project practitioners?
  - a. Is there a common understanding or definition of project performance?
  - b. How do project practitioners measure performance of HIV and AIDS projects?
  - c. Is there a common way of measuring performance?
- 2) What determines project performance?
  - a. How do project practitioners understand the project cycle?
  - b. What is it which commonly makes a project successful?
  - c. What is it which commonly leads a project to failure?
- 3) What is the perception of project practitioners on the usefulness of project management as a way of delivering social development projects?
  - a. What are the common worldviews or paradigms that influence project management in social development?
  - b. What is the relevance of systems thinking to social development projects?
- 4) What should be done to improve the field of project management in social development to:
  - a. Project managers as individual professionals?
  - b. Projects as social organizations (Kreiner, 1995) or systems within systems?

## **2.3 Delimitations and Limitations**

### **2.3.1 Object of Study**

According to Blanche and Durrheim objects are “the unit of analysis”. Babbie (1989)<sup>4</sup> distinguishes between four different units of analysis that are common in the social sciences “individuals, groups, organizations and social artifacts [products of human action]”. While this study focused on individual project practitioners working within organizational settings addressing the HIV and AIDS epidemic at national and regional levels, (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999) as unit of analysis, their responses were extrapolated to enable understanding of project management as a system in which individual practitioners, teams, organizations are only parts of a whole. Participants were

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<sup>4</sup> In Blanche and Durreheim (1999)

drawn from international, regional and national NGOs / bilateral organizations and donor agencies and government national AIDS programmes. To avoid “**ecological fallacy**”, (ibid), conclusions were drawn from the collective pattern of perceptions of practitioners responses and not on the basis of their individual institutional orientations or differences. While individual respondents could have been judgmental, their responses were analyzed within the framework of general patterns emerging from the rest of the responses, such that the resultant interpretation can not be identified with individuals or their organizations.

While it is acknowledged that such constructs as organizational environment; training background; nature of work –e.g. perception of HIV and AIDS as a disaster; donor fatigue; capacity and issues associated with organizations in the SADC region; and general poverty issues may have influenced participants responses, the research methodology did not control for confounding influences, choosing to interview participants in their natural environment. Nevertheless, signs of such influences have been noted during the analysis and interpretation of findings.

### **2.3.2 Properties and participants profile**

The sample of respondents was drawn from project practitioners (private consultants, project managers and directors of organizations) with at least 5 years of project management experience at local, national, regional and international levels. An attempt was made to obtain gender balance with 8 males and 7 females having participated in the study. The average age of participants was 41 years, with more than 75 years of project management at various levels between them. All participants had a minimum of Masters Degree level training. Forty five percent of the respondents had received some training in project management for an average of 5 days, while 55% did not indicate having received any formal training in project management. The basic orientation (Mouton and Marais, 1990) of the study are the perceptions of the project practitioners. Additional data was gathered from several research, progress and evaluation reports and strategic plans that

the researcher was referred to by respondents as well as his participation and observations in several workshops and meetings as part of his routine work.

### **2.3.3 Scope of the Study**

The study did not judge or evaluate the performance of individual project practitioners nor their organizations. The study solicited perceptions of project practitioners of “what works” or “does not work” based on their experiences and lessons learnt in implementing social development projects in general and HIV and AIDS projects in particular, within or outside their current organizational settings. These perceptions were considered within the context of their individual perspectives and worldviews which may indeed be influenced by their different experiences.

## **2.4 Procedures**

Two principles guided research design: a) design validity which relates to the relevance of the research design to measuring the purpose of the study; and b) design coherence which relates to the consistency and connectivity between the research methodology, the purpose of the study, the paradigmatic orientation and the findings of the study.

### **2.4.1 Justification for use of qualitative research**

#### **Qualitative research in comparison to quantitative research**

The researcher chose qualitative methodology because the study is formative in nature, seeking to construct knowledge on what determines performance of HIV and AIDS projects. The research also seeks to construct definitions of key terms in project management based on the understanding of project practitioners. In addition, an understanding of project performance of a complex and systemic issue such as HIV and AIDS requires an approach that allows for construction of meaning through dialogue more than one that solicits discrete responses. Such dialogue requires the use of open ended questionnaires and interviews to gather rich data.

“Quantitative researchers collect data in the form of numbers and use statistical types of data analysis. To construct meaning from a complex issue such as HIV and AIDS, the study needed to use qualitative research to collect data in the form of written or spoken language and observations that were recorded in language and analyze the data by identifying and categorizing themes. Quantitative and qualitative research have differing strengths and weaknesses and constitute alternative, not opposing, research strategies” (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

The study acknowledges that qualitative research is naturalistic, holistic and inductive. Since the research purpose is to study phenomena as they unfold in real world situations, without manipulation, to study phenomena as interrelated wholes rather than split up into discrete predetermined variables, an inductive, qualitative approach was considered ideal for this study (ibid) as was the case with this study. The use of quantitative research methods was considered rigid, with potential to stifle diversity and richness of responses.

The researcher interviewed practitioners within their different environments; there was no predetermined hypothesis to be measured or tested and comparisons to be made; neither was there control of the environment of respondents. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) qualitative research designs “cannot be given; it must emerge, develop, unfold”. The research sought to elicit diversity and interrelationships. There were no wrong or right answers. The researcher trusted the quality of responses from participants as worth contributing to knowledge on the basis of their experience and qualifications. The presumption or approach was that project management in social development is a grey area to be explored. Projects are systems embedded with complexity and interrelationships. One needs to approach any studies with openness. The study seeks to construct knowledge on project management through interaction with the practitioners.

## **Exploratory, Descriptive and Explanatory Studies**

In line with the purpose of the study, the study is largely exploratory. Exploratory studies are designed as open and flexible investigations. They adopt an inductive approach as the researcher makes a series of particular observations, and attempts to patch these together to form more general but speculative hypotheses. Exploratory research designs should detail how the researcher plans to collect information and where she or he will look for this information.

Interpretive and constructionist researchers, contend that qualitative research can be used not only for exploratory purposes, but also to formulate rich descriptions and explanations of human phenomenon, (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

## **Applied and basic research**

This study constitutes both basic and applied research. The design of the study will draw on practical experiences of project practitioners. Interpretation of findings will be based on both theory and practice on systems thinking and project management. The findings are therefore expected to contribute to improving on knowledge of project management as well as application to practical issues of problem-solving, decision-making, policy analysis and community development (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

In this study, the context is not specific. The population sample was drawn from project practitioners drawn from different organizations at different levels (regional, and national). Findings of the study were used to construct knowledge of a general nature about systems /project performance as well as identify more specific areas for in depth and more contextual study.

## 2.4.2 Qualitative research strategy

### Sampling

The researcher considered the number of respondents to be adequate for drawing conclusions given the qualitative but simplistic nature of the questionnaire design, the more or less consistent patterns and themes emerging from the responses and the wealth of literature from research studies, evaluations, progress reports and strategic plans of different organizations. A structured open ended research instrument was developed and pre-tested among a sample of social development practitioners and researchers.

Employing a combination of stratified –random and purposive sampling techniques, a sample of 40 practitioners was drawn from project practitioners with minimum 5 years experience drawn from known not- for- profit organizations and Government institutions and questionnaires were sent to them. Fifteen (15) of the recipients responded to the questionnaires in detail. Follow-up telephone and face to face discussions were conducted with the majority who responded for clarification, enrichment and validation of responses. In some cases, responses were validated by making reference to literature that respondents referred the researcher to. According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999), “representative samples are especially important in descriptive surveys that are used to estimate accurately the properties of populations. Types of research that are less concerned with statistical accuracy than they are with detailed and in-depth analysis such as interpretive and constructionist research, qualitative research and exploratory research – typically do not draw large or random samples. Various types of purposeful (i.e. non-random) sampling may be used”.

Three categories of institutions comprised of (1) regional and international organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the United Nations; (2) government programmes or National AIDS coordinating authorities; and (3) national

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on HIV and AIDS working in 5 of the SADC Member States of Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa.

All 15 respondents came from 15 different institutions representing government, national and regional civil and private sector. To a larger extent the experiences of the individuals in the sample of 15 respondents represented key target intervention constituencies in HIV and AIDS work of gender, young people, people living with HIV and AIDS, private sector HIV and AIDS programmes, faith based organizations, government sector programmes and policy formulation institutions. Research findings are better generalized to other situations if according to qualitative research experts, a technique called **sampling to redundancy** (not defining one's sample size in advance, but interviewing more and more people until the same themes and issues come up over and over again) is used.

Qualitative researchers advise that when preparing the research design, it is better to focus the research question in such a manner that one can explore in detail a small instance of a phenomenon rather than attempt to study a large issue with an inadequate sample.

#### **2.4.3 Role of the researcher**

The researcher sought consent from individuals identified as respondents to the study. In some cases, the researcher sought permission from the heads of institutions prior to interviewing employees of their organizations, Marshall and Rossman (1999). The researcher employed introspective skills to probe respondents to provide rich information whenever necessary. The researcher shall share a final copy of the dissertation with respondents to enable them to benefit from self reflection resulting from the research findings as professionals and practitioners. In this study, the researcher acted as both a facilitator and participant.

#### **2.4.4 Data collection procedures**

According to Zadek (1999), “data is the basic material with which researchers work. It comes from observation, and can take the form of numbers (numeric or quantitative) or language (qualitative data)”. This study involved constructing data and attaching meaning to it as Flood (1999) puts it, researchers should recognize that “...data is not waiting out there in volumes to be reaped like corn in an autumn harvest”.

Desk review of existing documents on lessons and experiences of identified institutions such as research reports, project proposal documents and operational plans and strategies; mission & vision of organizations; progress reports; project evaluation reports; reports of programme and management meetings and workshops, etcetera was conducted to complement interviews. According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999), whatever scale is used to measure a phenomenon, “data should capture the meaning of what the researcher is observing”.

Interpretive, and especially constructionist researchers maintain that the meaning of phenomena varies across contexts, and they adopt a more inductive approach to data collection, investigating how categories of observation emerge in context. Rather than using a measurement scale as an instrument of observation, in a qualitative research such as this one, the researcher became the instrument for measuring and interpreting research observations.

Data was collected using open ended questionnaire guide administered face to face, telephonically and by e-mail. Probing was done to elicit salient responses.

#### **2.4. 5 Data Analyses Procedures**

##### **Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis involved identifying themes in the data and relationships between these themes following the constructivist nature of the research paradigm. According to

Cresswell (2003), data analysis is to transform information (data) into an answer to the original question.

Flood (1999) argues that analysis of data involves some form of quantitative or qualitative measurement, which is a legitimate manipulation process by which numbers and labels are assigned to aspects of an organizational or societal context. Manipulation of data aids interpretation and subsequently transformation into useful format – it aids learning. While the research method is largely qualitative, quantitative analysis has been employed sparingly in this study realizing that in some cases, it is necessary to use qualitative and quantitative analysis in combination. Blanche and Durrheim (1999) acknowledge that ethno methodological research for example, is influenced by the interpretative paradigm, but aims to manipulate variables, a situation normally associated with positivism. Positivist research can use qualitative methods, normally associated with interpretive research and social constructionist research may attempt to explain causality, normally associated with positivism.

The findings of this study were categorized into themes and patterns and a more general picture of the phenomenon under investigation was constructed. This was done taking into account that “validity is not defined in terms of the extent to which the operational definition corresponds with the construct definition, but by the degree to which the researcher can produce observations that are believable for her or himself, the subjects being studied and the eventual readers of the study”, Blanche and Durrheim (1999).

### **Situation**

The research drew on participants in their natural day to day work and social environments to investigate the complex system of interrelationships that develop in management of HIV and AIDS projects without isolating and manipulating specific variables. According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999), “naturalistic inquiry is a non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non-controlling form of qualitative research that is open to whatever emerges in the research setting. The aim of such research is holistic”.

While the researcher was the main facilitator, effort was made to maintain constructive dialogue with participants most of whom were requested to orally cross validate their written responses.

#### **2.4. 6 Strategies for validating findings**

To minimize subjective influence on the interpretation of findings, the researcher responded to the questionnaire such that his views were taken as part of the pool of responses because, “as I reflect on my practice as project manager I am aware that I am always in relation with other people” (McNiff, J, 2000).

Given the qualitative and interrogative nature of the study methodology, the researcher was the sole administrator and analyzer of questionnaires to control for confounding subjectivity. Some of the respondents assisted to edit parts of the data analysis of this study, for as Blanche and Durrheim (1999) emphasize, “close facilitation of the research process – including adequate consultation with all those who have a stake in the outcome – is crucial. Unless the research process itself is ‘owned’ by all parties involved, it is likely that lack of co-operation, resistance and rejection of research findings will continue to bedevil field research designed to address conflict situations in development areas”.

### **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

#### **2.5.1 Ethical issues in the research problem statement**

The findings from the research does “not marginalize or dis-empower the study participants”, Cresswell (2003). In fact, respondents will benefit from the wealth of knowledge and information that has been generated through the research. The comments derived from some of the respondents suggests that the interviews were an opportunity for them to reflect on their project management skills and challenges.

### **2.5.2 Ethical issues in the purpose statement and research questions**

The researcher ensured that the purpose of the study was adequately described to participants. According to Cresswell, deception occurs when participants understand one purpose for a study but the researcher has a different purpose in mind.

### **2.5.3. Ethical issues in data collection**

The researcher avoided putting participants at risk, and respected anonymity of both, the respondents, their organizations and those they made reference to. “As researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants and the sites for research”. Cresswell (2003)

Informed consent was sought from participants before engaging them in the research. After the initial appeal and assuring that selected participants had received mailed questionnaires, the researcher did not insist or follow-up on 25 of the practitioners who did not respond to the questionnaire, preferring to rely on voluntary participation. From the comments emanating from pre-testing, the research assumed that some of the targeted participants who did not respond could have perceived the questionnaire as a test on their project management knowledge and skills to which they did not want to be subjected. In addition, the questionnaire was considered long.

### **2.5.4 Ethical issues in analysis and interpretation of findings**

Anonymity of individuals will be protected. As Cresswell recommends, in qualitative research, inquirers use aliases or pseudonyms for individuals and places to protect identities. Taking into consideration research standards which require that data, once analyzed, be kept for a reasonable period of time), after which it can be discarded so that it does not fall into the hands of other researchers who might appropriate it for other

purposes (e.g., Sieber<sup>5</sup>, 1998, recommends 5-10 years), the researcher will keep information for at least a year after formal acceptance of this dissertation by the University of Kwazulu - Natal.

The researcher takes personal responsibility over the views expressed by the study. Berg (2001<sup>6</sup>) recommends the use of “personal agreements” to designate ownership of research data. In addition, to the best of his efforts, the researcher has provided an accurate account of responses during analysis and interpretation, often quoting respondents verbatim and in others, requesting follow-up explanation to written responses. Berg notes that such accuracy may require ‘debriefing’ in quantitative research and use of validation strategies to check accuracy of qualitative research

### **2.5.5 Ethics in Writing and Disseminating the Research**

The language and words used in this study is neutral, without bias to any person regardless of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age. The researcher is aware and therefore avoided such tendencies as suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet a researcher’s or an audience’s needs, recognizing that doing so is fraudulent. Nonetheless, the researcher declares his own orientation and preference of systems thinking as overriding his views and conclusions in this study. The researcher has considered any repercussions of conducting the research on certain audiences and will not misuse the results to the advantage of one group or another.

### **2.6 Significance of the Study**

The study is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on project management. In addition, the study identifies some areas that may need further research. Results of the study will be shared with participants and others interested (Cresswell, 2003) for use in their project management practice.

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<sup>5</sup> In Bickman and Rog (Eds) (1998)

<sup>6</sup> In Cresswell (2003)

The researcher used information from respondents to draw conclusions based on what emerged as common issues that bear relevance to established theory within the parameters of practical social interaction. While the researcher does not claim that the conclusions of this study are free from criticism and that they may not necessarily be perceived as universally generalizable, these conclusions certainly provide a basis for self-reflection on project management practice on the part of individuals and organizations including the researcher and all those who will read this report. It elicits dialogue among development practitioners and helps to identify areas that may require further research. Such dialogue is expected to lead to the designing, adoption or strengthening of systemic development processes that are socially sensitive, inclusive of and built within the fabric of any social development efforts.

In addition, the study has identified some aspects of managing social development processes that may require further research, and provided recommendations and proposals on improving delivery of social development projects.

## CHAPTER 3 MEASURING PERFORMANCE OF HIV AND AIDS PROJECTS

The chapter seeks to define performance, what a project is, and the ways in which performance of HIV and AIDS projects can be measured. It also identifies some of the factors that distinguish “good” from “bad” evaluations, and end with a brief analysis of the use of external and internal evaluators.

### 3.1 Defining a Project and Project Performance

#### 3.1.1 What is a Project?

Respondents brought up the following as definitions of a project:

- a) A **planned process to deliver development initiatives** within given **resources and time**
- b) A project **aims to achieve an overall goal**, broken down in several results by implementing a **set of activities**
- c) A defined **short term activity**, typically one to three years, with discrete objectives and outputs and defined budget
- d) A task with an objective and **outcome with specific start and end dates** and limited resources
- e) A **series of integrated** actions with a defined start and end point, specific goals and objectives and time frames. **Could be extra things** that must be done/achieved **that do not necessarily fall within the routine job profile**.
- f) An undertaking which involves employing resources for a specified time period. A project **addresses a specific need**, which could be economical or social in nature
- g) **Structured work** that has a short lifespan. It is **unique** in terms of objectives, activities and outputs
- h) A set of activities, designed to achieve certain **goals based on planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating** in a short term period

- i) A specific time period where one is engaged to perform a specific job with set objectives and time frame. There is a **plan of action** which identifies: the problem, aim of the project, objectives, strategies and activities, monitoring and evaluation, resources provided and how they will be used
- j) A **component of a program** that is geared towards addressing a specific need – has defined objectives, **lifecycle (start and end)**, **specific target group**, and usually has **geographic location**, budget and operational plan.

From the above definitions, a project can be identified from the perspective of (a) a process (b) performance target (goal /objective /outcome) (c) taking action (d) resources and timeframe and (e) subsystem or smaller system within a larger system or *“part of a whole”*.

In accordance with the patterns of responses, the **definition** of a project can be summarized as **a planned and structured, often unique process of activities, usually a component of a programme targeted to a geographic area or community to achieve specific objectives and outputs, addressing specific social and economic needs or issues within limited resources and timeframe.**

The mention of a project as part of a programme and not an end in itself, makes sense. It recognizes that even if resources and time for a particular project has elapsed, there is still need to continue implementing the programme *“for as long as the problem exists”*.

Implied in the definition is the need to make a change for the better. Also implied is that projects are often part of a much bigger picture – the programme. The boundaries of the project fall within the boundaries of a programme - a “much bigger project” with an overarching goal or intention which comprise of more components or projects and sub projects that would intentionally or unintentionally interact with those of the project. A project design should therefore be identified with a bigger picture or system of HIV and AIDS control.

The definitions also imply that a project is identified through the patterns of relationships and interaction between its components and in addition, those of the bigger picture (system and its various subsystems). Any project design framework should recognize the natural co-existence of the project and other social development efforts and thus clearly articulate the linkages, bridges and partnerships that would enable complementarity and synergy of those efforts. In other words, during the period of implementation, the project should develop a mutual relationship with other components of the bigger system under which it immediately exists to avoid chaos and minimize complexity.

The responses confirm field observations that current project performance measurement systems are mechanistic in nature, resulting in project indicators being built around “desired outputs”. This situation limits the ability of the project to capture or measure the “undesired, unintended or unplanned outputs”, some of which may have significant implications both to defining the success or failure of the project. It would appear that there is an inherent but flawed assumption in project designs that “undesired, unintended or unplanned outcomes” do not occur – that the project is designed on a clearly defined and predictable cause – and effect pattern and flows along a defined rail. It assumes that project implementation occurs within a predictable environment and certainty. This of course, is seldom the case with systemic messy situations such as HIV and AIDS. This mechanistic assumption is reinforced by the assertion by most respondents that “yes” the success or failure of a project can be determined from the onset. While good planning is critical to project success, the plan on its own does not determine success. Several unforeseen issues may emerge that can distract the plan, as one respondent noted “*a good project design based on a methodological checklist gives an illusion that everything is fine and will remain fine*”.

### 3.1.2 What is project performance?

The definition of project performance emerged as follows:

- a. **Measurement of attainment or realization** of the **specific objectives** or intended outputs usually **according to plan** that has scope of work, resources and certain steps.
- b. **How well** a project is **running in all many aspects** such as delivery of outputs or milestones and use of resources
- c. Reaching the objectives and **delivering the outputs on time**
- d. Achievement of results and contributing towards overall goal with most effective use of funds
- e. A definition of the **success and weaknesses of planned activities** in a given period. Includes evaluation of inputs or resources such as funds used for the activities
- f. A measure of **success or failure** in delivering project tasks in terms of **over/under** utilization of allocated resources, **reporting systems**, etc.
- g. Extent to which the project achieves its defined objectives, outputs, impacts, etc. It is **often multi-dimensional**. There is monetary (cost) dimension measured in terms of planned versus actual spend, outputs for (actual versus planned), time lines, etc. Can be **measured in qualitative terms e.g. impact on quality of life /standard of living**.
- h. Providing **pragmatic estimates of the progress** of a particular project **based on feedback** obtained from monitoring and evaluation data. Normally given in percentage terms, e.g. 20% of the task is completed
- i. A measure of success or failure of a defined intervention **over a period of time**

From the responses, it would appear that the performance of a project can be characterized and identified from the perspective of (a) fulfillment of an intention (b) attainment of an output or product (c) efficiency and effectiveness of the process (d) deliberate use of a monitoring and evaluation process to measure, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Responses indicate that there is a close relationship between the

definition and perception of a project and that of performance. This suggests that an ill conception or understanding of a project results in poor interpretation of project performance.

Presented in another way, **performance** can be defined as **a planned and pragmatic qualitative or quantitative measurement or estimate of the extent, effectiveness and efficiency of a process of planned efforts to produce or fulfill a desired product or intention within given timeframe and resources as established through a defined monitoring and evaluation process.**

The measurement is often multi-dimensional, encompassing many aspects such as process management, delivery of outputs or milestones, use of resources, timeliness, etc, measured against a plan. Performance can be measured in qualitative terms and helps determine how well (success or failure, strengths and weaknesses) a project is running in a given period. Measurement is established on the basis of feedback from regular monitoring and evaluation of effort.

### **3.2 Performance Measuring System**

*The performance of a system is measured not by its built form or structure, but the nature of its relationships - the dynamics of the interactions of the various components that comprise it and in relation to its external environment.*

#### **3.2.1 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The two major processes in measuring performance of HIV and AIDS projects are **monitoring and evaluation**. These processes are outlined in detail below.

**Monitoring** entail checking on progress and quality of interventions. Indicators are set up to continuously monitor progress through monthly /quarterly /annual reports”. It also “involves budgetary monitoring and evaluation which can be done internally or

externally”. This can be done regularly such as “daily, etc, so that a weekly, monthly or quarterly output is given” through project visits. Respondents warned against the tendency by some development organizations to engage “long distance monitoring” or monitoring projects from far. Monitoring should be done regularly and should be built at all levels of implementation.

**Evaluation** is a process of generating information for purposes of informing the development and measure performance and impact of a program or project during, and at the end of its implementation. It is either formative or summative. Formative evaluation informs program personnel on decision making, problem solving, strategic planning and improving programs. Summative evaluation is conducted at the end of the program to provide stakeholders with judgments about the program’s worth or merit. It informs decision concerning program continuation, termination, expansion, adoption, etc. (Worthen and Sanders (1987).

Some of the respondents considered evaluation as “more of a downstream activity”. In particular, **impact evaluation** “is normally conducted at the end of the project for tracking the implementation of the plan of action”. Respondents noted that evaluations check on whether the project is meeting expected outputs /outcomes and “can be useful to reshaping and directing resources and effort where necessary”. Most respondents noted that evaluations are conducted periodically- typically annually, mid way through the time frame of the project and at the end of the project. They also distinguished “review meetings” as lying somewhere “in between monitoring and evaluation”, and useful for “self reflection by the project team”.

Respondents highlighted the need for strategic plans; national policies to guide implementation; monitoring and evaluation tools; research study guides and review reports and records to inform monitoring and evaluation.

Performance measurement is a process that should be prepared and begin prior to the commencement of the project. For example, respondents note that studies such as

baseline research are a good way of providing the basis against which performance can be measured. In terms of finances, annual audits were noted as a major tool of considering if funds are well managed. Respondents pointed out that at the planning stage, a monitoring and evaluation plan should be developed which spells out different levels of specific indicators. The indicators were defined and separated as follows:

- a) **Input indicators**- which entails resources employed in a project e.g. amount of funds used, human/ technical and material resources and time;
- b) **Process** – showing the how or methodology employed in implementing the project and the capacity of responsible institutions to implement. Respondents recognize that process indicators “*should be tracked in a way that enables feedback on the project implementation process to the project team, management, donors and beneficiaries*”. Most HIV and AIDS monitoring and evaluation systems neglect to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the systems used to deliver the project plans, preferring instead to measure only the changes to the symptoms of the epidemic. For national AIDS coordination councils for example, performance measurement should take cognizant of the systemic nature of HIV and AIDS and include indicators that track the extent of executing coordination functions, development of partnerships and collaboration, effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation, efforts for building sustainability, among others. There should be indicators to track emerging issues so that they can be addressed proactively rather than reactively. Current monitoring and evaluation systems appear to lack indicators to identify what might be going wrong in project implementation processes and emerging issues owing to the overly mechanistic nature of project design frameworks. As a result, the same mistakes are repeated over and over again resulting in projects failing to comprehensively control the epidemic.
- c) **Output indicators** – indicating the specific activities undertaken. In terms of condom social marketing projects for example, such performance is measured in terms of number of condom pieces sold out per month. For other projects

such as behavior change communication, it is number of sessions held, people trained, people reached and promotions held, etc.

- d) **Outcome** – short term to intermediate changes such as change in risky behavior.
- e) **Impact** – long term effect on the major goal or objective e.g. reduction in new HIV infections.

The study notes that progress in the implementation of the plan should be reviewed and reported on a regular basis such as monthly or quarterly guided by the spelt out indicators of project performance. Such reporting also includes accounting on financial or resource expenditure for the activities undertaken. To quote one respondent, progress can be reported in “*qualitative form such as a description on the improvement of the quality of life. In some cases it’s a numbers game such as how many condoms were distributed, how many peer educators were trained, how much money was spent on leaflets, treatment, etc*” In other cases, it is about having policies in place to guide HIV and AIDS responses such as non discrimination. Progress reporting should track implementation of these policies as well.

Evidence from observations in the field indicates that in most cases, there is a huge disparity between what is talked about in policy statements and what is happening and as one respondent noted “*The reality is that due to lack of capacity for planning and tracking on progress and performance, for some institutions, it is not clear what the organization really intends to measure*”. This lack of capacity include poorly prepared Terms of Reference for the evaluation process resulting in evaluation teams (in particular external consultants) not having a clear direction and understanding of priorities.

A major gap and challenge with the majority of projects as noted by one respondent is, “*... having a provision or ability to measure achievements beyond the planned project indicators or measuring impact which could be realized some time after the project has ended*”. The assumption is that the project should and will only influence change during the course of its implementation or timeframe. As in the definitions of a project and

performance, it would appear that in some cases, the meeting the timeframe is sometimes the most important pre-occupation of project teams as a determinant of performance of a project; nothing more beyond the “date” of project completion. As a result, critical impacts of most projects are not recorded. In addition, as one respondent observed, *“often, what is missed in the objectives of monitoring and evaluation processes is the subsequent process of dissemination – ‘getting the findings out there’”*. There is often little time allocated to ensure that project results are received and understood by the various levels of stakeholders and beneficiaries and that they are capacitated to use them. To quote one respondent, *“in some cases the purpose does not go beyond gathering information to convince the donors that work was done and funds properly utilized”*. This situation suggests that the hand over phase of most projects is not given adequate attention and time and is considered as more as an event than a process that require a comprehensive exit strategy or plan.

Relative to the short period of time in which projects are typically implemented and evaluated, the complex and systemic nature of HIV and AIDS, respondents noted that it is difficult for individual projects *“to actually see the impact or outcomes over a short period of time”* and *“besides a project cannot claim to have singularly made that outcome and impact from a single project - it means collective effort”*. Ironically, as one respondent echoed, what some organizations may claim as success of their projects effort *“may not be attributable to their project performance per se as they could be more than one agency, project, etc that would have contributed to the outcome and impact”*.

In HIV and AIDS, the need to ensure that organizations working on similar interventions are measuring the same things is enormous, even if in cases where they use different intervention approaches to ensure that success or failure is not vulnerable to subjective interpretations. As the study suggests, this is important realizing that current research and monitoring and evaluation frameworks and agenda of most HIV and AIDS control organizations are driven by regional and international organizations and in some cases overriding country specific needs and priorities. The study also notes that different

organizations working on HIV and AIDS in the same country often measure different things in different ways or in some cases, measuring the same things differently. These observations challenge organizations working on HIV and AIDS, particularly those targeting similar geographic areas and target groups to share and harmonize project designs and implement joint monitoring and evaluation processes. In particular, the universal recognition and acceptance by project practitioners of the use of the Logical Framework as a tool for measuring performance could justify harmonizing and adopting particular standards of the Logical Framework as a way of ensuring consistency in measuring performance across organizations and countries in the SADC region. But, noting that current Logical Frameworks or similar approaches are largely rigid and mechanistic in the way they are set to monitor performance indicators over time, such harmonization efforts would require that the Logical Framework be reviewed and designed to be a flexible and adaptive tool that can accommodate emergence during the course of implementing a project. The standardization of logframes would ensure that all organizations working on similar interventions focus or employ relatively similar strategies and work towards the same results. Input, process, output and impact indicators would be the same for similar interventions. They would recognize more or else the same risks for example for organizations targeting the same geographic area and population group, and work on the basis of related assumptions, etc. The responses suggest that the problem with current HIV and AIDS efforts is that different organizations emphasize different strategies, define their logframes differently and make different assumptions even though they may be working on the same population group. The result is that there is little connectivity and linkage between the efforts by different organizations and what is measured as contributing for example to reduction in new HIV infections in an area. This compromises measurement of impact. In the worst cases, different interpretation of performance by different organizations working in the same environment can confuse targeted communities resulting in efforts producing a counter-effect. Because donors more often influence project designs, they should in the same vein, harmonize rules and conditions of funding and in that way contribute to developing systemic and standardized “logical frameworks” or similar tools for measuring performance.

Such harmonized systemic monitoring and evaluation systems would enable joint monitoring and evaluation practices and allow flexibility for project teams to share ideas, lessons and experiences within and across organizations and adopt and jointly refine relevant methodologies during the course of implementation based on experiential learning and reflection. What becomes important under such arrangements is not so much what a single organization has not done or done differently, but the collective effort that will have produced the outcome. Measurement and comments on the level of efficiency of individual organizations can be made within a systemic constructive perspective that recognizes the efforts of other players rather than assuming individual responsibility for success and assigning “blame and labeling” for failure.

When harmonizing monitoring and evaluation processes, caution must be taken to avoid the tendency to establish “blue prints” or “one size fits all models”. One would suggest that harmonization would provide guidance on expected outcomes, while the methodologies on how to achieve these outcomes is left to individual organizations to choose based on their local contexts. Harmonization should acknowledge diversity as some of the respondents noted *“even if the goals and objectives /intentions may be the same, every project is different and unique from any other”*. Thought processes that influence the design of projects are bound to be different, and so are the environments, the relationships, the emergence and actions that define the course of each project.

Drawing from the responses, the study has drawn a checklist of what characterizes good and bad performance measurement or monitoring and evaluation systems of HIV and AIDS projects as shown in insert 1.

### **Insert 1: Characteristics of Good and Bad Monitoring and Evaluation System**

Based on field responses to the questionnaire, the following were identified as requisite characteristics of an effective **performance measurement or monitoring and evaluation system**:

- a) reliable ("can be fair and used elsewhere with similar results");
- b) valid (measure what it is designed to measure);
- c) participatory (involving stakeholders). "There should be a mechanism for discussion or dialogue on the findings of monitoring and evaluation information";
- d) planned (clearly defined in terms of when it happens, target group, variables to be measured, roles and responsibilities should be clear);
- e) have clear objectives, strategies, indicators, budget and resource allocation and timeline or schedule of its own;
- f) clear reporting mechanism;
- g) have "known sources of data";
- h) professional (evaluation team should be impartial, have integrity, honest);
- i) useful (results must be able to be used to improve ongoing or future or other programmes);
- j) produce constructive recommendations "which are practical and realistic and not subjective and hypothetical";
- k) establish achievement of project milestones and deliverables as well as "efficiency of the use of both human and financial resources".

Based on field responses to the questionnaire, the following were identified as characterizing **bad performance measurement or monitoring and evaluation systems**:

- a) Poor planning and failure to meet the objectives of the evaluation. The design of any evaluation framework should be informed by the design of the project that it seeks to measure – otherwise the evaluation will end up measuring something else other than the efforts or lack of them, of the project. The temptation by project evaluators is to employ some standard evaluation criteria based on some blue print adapted elsewhere may lead them to be rigid in the evaluation process and miss important issues in their findings and interpretation of findings and subsequent recommendations.
- b) Ambiguous organizational policies, procedures and benchmarks make it difficult to effectively establish performance of a project. This makes it difficult for performance measurement systems to identify and match the role, effort and contributions of individuals working on the project in relation to what is expected to be achieved and to overall project success.
- c) Lack of appropriate theoretical framework. Like project designs, project evaluations often lack grounding in a theoretical framework. This results in inconsistent observations, analysis and recommendations of some evaluation results.

- d) Inadequate methodology, lack of clear tools to gather data and poor analysis of data. This can emanate from a number of reasons among which is the lack of requisite skills from the evaluation team or assumption of "expert" orientation. More often, the evaluators become the experts in themselves; their findings and interpretations becoming much dependent on their own, sometimes emotive perceptions, rather than on the environment and antecedents determining the outcome of the project.
- e) Lack of involvement of key staff and stakeholders in the evaluation process. The use of consultants who are not only external to the organization, but more often as is the case with most donor funded projects, also external to the environment in which the project is implemented, naturally create distortions in evaluation processes.
- f) Judgmental process. The risk of evaluators becoming judgmental is often very high due to a number of reasons that may include lack of integrity of the evaluator; their perspectives; their desire to be seen to have worked for the money received; their zeal to prove their worth, sophistry and competitiveness in the market, etc. In some cases, the evaluators' assumptions are a complete mismatch from the reality on the ground. This creates distrust between the evaluators and those being evaluated or questioned. As a result, the people being evaluated fail to understand the agenda of the evaluators, thereby withholding or providing incorrect information.
- g) Some evaluations "are just not aligned to project designs that they are supposed to measure. They fail to focus on the outputs of the project". This may result from evaluators being judgmental of the project design and evaluating what they wish the project design should have been.
- h) Respondents also noted that results of some evaluations are predetermined by the client who commissions the evaluation. For example, pressure on the organization driving the project to report success even where it may not exist for fear of losing donor funding may compel the organization to influence or edit the evaluation report in their favor resulting in improper attribution of cause and effect. This point is summed by one respondent who said, "The classic one for me is where the project owner /implementer want a specific evaluation outcome showing good performance to be recorded regardless of the facts emerging from the evaluation. The actual choice of the consultant /evaluator being whether to report it as we see it (and lose the client) or bend the results to keep the client. This is a clear case of the client not wanting honest feedback". Such a reductionist, narrow minded perspective often ignores other relationships of the project environment and critical stakeholders to whom some aspects of project performance could be attributed to In addition it would appear that some evaluations tend to focus on specific aspects of the project at the expense of others. Often, evaluations tend to focus more on the targeted result and neglect the process aspect of project implementation such as the methodology used to implement the project which would have influenced that particular result. Consequently, their interpretation of findings and recommendations become less relevant to correcting /improving methodological shortcomings of the project.
- i) Results of the evaluation may be perceived not to be useful by some key stakeholders. This is often the case where evaluations are commissioned by donors on the basis of fulfilling their own institutional

agenda. In some cases it is "a result of baseline data not being factual", irrelevant, haphazardly done and not giving true picture of the situation.

- j) Some evaluations "take too long to start and or to finish". By the time they are finished, they may be of less value to those who would have wanted to use them to improve on the project or other initiatives. The timing of evaluations is therefore important, both in terms of beginning and ending.
- k) In some cases, evaluations are limited to desk work, with no adequate field consultation and dialogue. "Secondary information may be so weak or non-existent to the extent that making a credible assessment becomes practically impossible". In such cases, interpretation becomes very subjective and presumptive. The secondary information from which the evaluation is based may not fully represent or explain the project outcome.
- l) The terms of reference for the evaluation given to the evaluators by the organization commissioning the evaluation may not be clear as a result of the project manager /client not competent to know exactly what they want evaluated. To quote one respondent, "you sense that the project manager is fumbling around and doesn't quite know what is really going down on the one hand, while on the other, they are busy running rings around a bunch of not so sophisticated political masters who can't read a balance sheet even if you put it the right way up".

### 3.2.2 What a performance system measures

The performance system should measure what has been achieved and the impact it has made. For example, "*financial management training should enable the trainee to manage financial resources e.g. petty cash by reporting accordingly, giving receipts, etc*". Project management training "*could lead to better planning (developing clear work plans), reporting without being pushed to, etc*". The system should measure "*whether set objectives were achievable - if they were not, what were the constraints [as well as] lessons learned in the project*". Some respondents emphasized that "*there are those important issues to be controlled during implementation such as the time, cost, key results – all these can be monitored against work schedules and project objectives*". Where a logical framework was used in the project design, "*it becomes easier to monitor (with) the detail of indicators stated for the project. But in the absence of a logical framework, it is difficult to measure indicators*". In other cases, the system would measure "*project milestones (in the case of process indicators) and include tasks or phases of the project that must be completed while deliverables include things such as*

*research instruments, progress reports, draft reports and final reports in my specific context, which include some indicators of how well things turned out in the project”.*

A closer analysis of the responses suggest that a performance measurement system should also establish such issues as: the relevance of the project design to meeting the objectives and outputs; whether resources and time are adequate to fulfill objectives and used efficiently; whether specific indicators have been or are being met; whether there are other emerging issues that would need to be addressed (but not earlier anticipated); whether the project will be timely completed; whether ongoing interventions are still relevant; any emerging risks, opportunities or threats; experiences that may be built on to strengthen the project; inherent strengths and weaknesses of project design and implementation process; among other issues.

It is not always easy for organizations to determine priorities to be measured for any particular HIV and AIDS project as one respondent argued, *“There are potentially too many things that can be measured and tracked. It costs money, time and sometimes creates clutter. I don’t think there can be a predetermined list of the ones to select, because sometimes some issues come up unexpectedly during the course of the project”.* Some responses suggest that stakeholders may *“pay varying attention to the measures depending on their role in the project as well as expectations”.* In general, respondents agreed with the statement made by one respondent that *“as a general rule, for improvement measures, I want a baseline, and a target to shoot at; with outputs qualified by 2- 5 indicators”.* This was reinforced by the realization of the importance of *“weighting (where feasible) performance area’s relative importance”.*

The use of the metaphor “a target to shoot at” presupposes a static target which does not move or change by itself or as a result of several factors in the environment. This mechanistic perspective is may not be valid for HIV and AIDS responses which are characterized by interaction of complex relationships and emergence. Again, this challenges a rethink of the current positivist paradigm within which social development projects are designed and the wide use of mechanistic Logical Frameworks to track and

measure performance of HIV and AIDS projects. It suggests that some assumptions underlying HIV and AIDS project design frameworks could be irrelevant to the nature of the problem that they aspire to address. This situation requires that projects and performance measurement systems should be designed in a flexible way that goes beyond “specific target to shoot at” by accommodating and measuring emergence.

Ability to measure performance is critical to successful project management and yet as the study suggests, it is given inadequate attention, rather being considered as “more of a down stream activity”. For HIV and AIDS projects as indicated by respondents’ definition of evaluation is limited to an event (such as mid term or final evaluation), conducted periodically. It would appear that successful project performance requires that monitoring and evaluation be built as a routine day to day behavioral pattern of project practitioner functions to allow for effective momentary reflective thinking and practice that enables experiential learning to be immediately fed back into project management experiences. Systemic monitoring and evaluation frameworks offer flexibility to measure emerging priorities in HIV and AIDS control efforts such as partnerships, collaboration and coordination efforts (World Bank-SACU meeting of national AIDS commissions). Project practitioners should consciously experience the day to day performance of their projects by adopting monitoring and evaluation as the most important function of their work and devoting much of their time to it.

### **3.2.3 Is performance measurement consistent across organizations working on HIV and AIDS?**

Most respondents indicated that they understood project performance measurement in the same way as the organizations they worked for, suggesting that there should be no conflict between what project practitioners do and measure and the expectations of their organizations, with some reiterating that *“One’s perception of performance has to be consistent with that of their organization – this is critical for effective use of resources and to fulfill the core business of the organization”*. This congruence may be explained by the fact that all respondents were well educated and in middle or top

management and therefore had influence on the strategies used by their organizations as one respondent said, *“My definition of performance is consistent with that of my organization because I am in the decision making body of the organization”*. In addition, almost all respondents had received short term (not more than 5 days) and largely on the job project management training through their organizations than through academic settings where theory would be taught, discussed and debated resulting in divergence of ideas.

Most of the respondents further perceived their understanding of project performance to be consistent with that of most organizations that they knew, assuming a “universal” understanding and application of performance measurement among HIV and AIDS programmes and projects. *“My perception of performance is consistent with that of my organization and other organizations such as Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, international partners such a WHO Infant Research Project, etc.”* They argued that performance measurement should be the same, through use of logical frameworks or similar approaches by different organizations.

While the responses suggest that the definitional understanding of performance measurement could be universal, the study also indicate that in practice, different organizations working on similar interventions were not using the same measurements or measuring exactly the same things. Even the presence of common national monitoring and evaluation frameworks does not preclude differences in what different organizations ultimately measure as performance.

It would appear that performance measurements processes differ between projects and organizations as a result of some of the following factors:

- a. Differences in donor conditions and priorities
- b. Differences in choices of interventions adopted e.g. there are different interventions that can be adopted to promote prevention efforts and as one respondent said, *“the key issue is causal attribution –prevention is influenced by a wide range of factors including non-intervention phenomena such as knowing*

*people who have died, conversations with friends, etc. so programmes that claim that they are monocausally capable of social engineering in relation to prevention need to be examined critically”.*

- c. Differences in methodologies used to evaluate projects. Often, there is incongruence in methodologies and subsequently the interpretation of findings. The perspective and world views of those who designed the project, those implementing it and those evaluating it can differ. This requires that external evaluators understand the assumptions underlying the design of the project to be evaluated as well as declare their own assumptions and world views if different.
- d. Capacity, skills and commitment: Level of capacity is a major issue as one respondent noted, “ *With some clients, perhaps as a function of sophistication (or lack of it?!), project deliverables are grandiose, wordy, and vague, and tend to be subject to varying interpretation and, as a corollary, the measures of performance that are tracked during and after the project don’t make a lot of sense, or are just easy ones, certainly not telling the whole story about how the project has actually performed”.*
- e. Extent to which boundaries for monitoring and evaluating are defined
- f. The wording of objectives, outputs /outcomes /impact indicators which may end up conveying different meanings for the same thing
- g. Differences in perceptions of impact between different organizations
- h. Differences in assumptions and theories referred to and
- i. The socio-cultural, behavioral and demographic variations of the target group

#### **3.2.4 Internal or External Evaluators**

Respondents provided different arguments on the use of internal and external evaluators. In this study, there is consensus that regardless of the strengths of using either internal or external evaluators, combining the two approaches is considered best. Respondents acknowledged that the universal understanding and use of monitoring and evaluation is rather a fairly new phenomenon. Most organizations, particular Government HIV and

AIDS programmes have not internalized the benefits and use of monitoring and evaluation as a systemic tool for measuring and directing performance.

Evaluations are largely viewed as a “thing” a once off event conducted either midway through the project and at the end. The idea of building evaluation into day to day implementation as a tool for continuous conscious self reflection and experiential learning is not universally practiced. The common practice in project evaluation is the use of external “expert” evaluators. “

Some respondents argued for the use of internal staff to evaluate projects noting that this practice contribute to building their capacity. It is easier for the staff to identify and relate to their weaknesses if they control and execute the evaluation than if done by external people. There is less “blame” of failure or weaknesses on others and better sense of ownership of the findings and the outcome. They have knowledge of the project and would not spend much time reviewing literature and studying the situation. External consultants were perceived as often lacking depth and expertise in this regard. In addition, internal evaluation has the benefit of those involved in the process being able to design the evaluation within a common understanding of the assumptions and perspectives that guided the original project design and implementation processes. It is also cheaper to use internal personnel.

On the other hand, respondents also noted that external consultants were more likely to be objective and report the findings of the evaluation without bias. They *“look at things from a different perspective as an outsider”* and they are neutral. However, the person chosen to evaluate must be qualified and *“be familiar with HIV and AIDS projects or the type of project in question”*. They must approach the evaluation systemically and be *“able to see the bigger picture”*. The majority of respondents noted that *“external evaluators enable the organization to identify project strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threat”*. External consultants were considered *“able to contribute ideas on how the project could be further improved.”* They give an overall independent opinion on how *“the project was conducted overall”*.

There is consensus from the responses on the simultaneous use of both internal and external evaluators. This is also useful to neutralizing the shortcomings of each method as one respondent noted: *“Internal evaluation might be a bit biased while external is quite objective. Both are important as internal one allows for an own solution to correct especially minor problems”*. Both types of evaluators should be used. Using external consultants *“to work with local counterparts to carry out the evaluation enable transfer of skills”*.

With some respondents, it does not matter which type of evaluation is used. *“The challenge mainly is to ensure that an objective approach is taken – if an internal evaluation, the obligation is upon the researchers to demonstrate that they were sufficiently critical. It’s not impossible and can be done quite adequately”*.

To summarize, here is an extract from one respondent: *“Although I should prefer external evaluation since I am a consultant who makes a living out of this, everything considered, I don’t think self-evaluation and external consultant evaluation are mutually exclusive. Assuming the same measures are being applied, the result must be the same (more or less). What may be different could be the interpretation of the result which may be more fundamental than the full half-full vs half-empty scenario. Some circumstances may dictate an external evaluation. Financial audits legally require an external audit for instance. Neither is inherently and 100% free from personal bias. Are project owners/ implementers more likely to hide /under play project underperformance or to be generally less objective than external consultants? May be but not necessarily so. To some extent, this must depend on the measures that are being applied for each. Some form of self-evaluation surely must be mandatory, perhaps validated by external enquiry. I can’t see a one size fits all approach being applicable although I can understand one donor insisting on external evaluations for all projects while another only requires it for some”*.

Responses suggest that the general understanding of projects and project performance is universal among the respondents. Projects are generally short term targeted interventions with limited resources. The use of such short term interventions to address a complex, systemic problem such as HIV and AIDS whose duration is unknown, poses challenges of achieving impact and sustainability. The nature in which HIV and AIDS projects are designed and implemented need to be reviewed to ensure consistency and continuity in trying to address the epidemic. The use of mechanistic and deterministic metaphors such as “target”, “logical framework”, “project closure”, “funds flowing”, ‘donors”, etc appear to reinforce the mechanistic nature of HIV and AIDS project designs. It appears that current project management practice and in particular the use of the Logical Framework in its rigid form appears to be outdated for use to address complex and systemic issues such as HIV and AIDS projects.

Monitoring and evaluation is confirmed as the major way of measuring performance of HIV and AIDS projects in the SADC region. Indicators for measuring project performance can be divided into input, process, output, outcome and impact. Different organizations emphasize different types of indicators in their projects based on what they want to achieve within the time of that particular project. The short term nature of HIV and AIDS projects relative to the magnitude of the epidemic makes it difficult to realize outcome and impact indicators within the duration of the project. It is also not easy to measure the specific impact caused by a project in an environment in which they are several players working on HIV and AIDS control.

While the study suggests that there is a generally universal understanding of project performance, in practice, different organizations use different ways of measuring it in some cases producing different results for seemingly similar interventions. End of project evaluations of most HIV and AIDS projects appear to be aligned to answer questions on whether the projects have met donor conditions of funding more than to inform project practitioners, implementing organizations and beneficiaries on better future project design and implementation processes. This is for the simple reason that most projects are not only funded by donors, but they also stop with the end of the funding period and

therefore any forwarding looking project improvement recommendations lose relevance. There is need to review and harmonize current monitoring and evaluation practices at organizational, national and regional levels to ensure consistency in defining success and failure within the context of actual benefit or lack of it, to local communities during the duration of the project and the projected benefit or lack of it in the long term after the project ends. The study suggests that more effort is required at community, national and regional levels to establish and strengthen partnerships to ensure comprehensive and systemic implementation, monitoring and evaluation of HIV and AIDS projects in the SADC region.

The understanding of monitoring and evaluation and its use in projects and programmes among SADC Member States has generally been very low. As a result, most projects have not been informed and improved using experiential learning and information from monitoring and evaluation. There is noticeably no culture of using monitoring and evaluation information to improve project and programme delivery among organizations and Government institutions working on HIV and AIDS control in the SADC region. The challenge to ensure universal training and skills building and facilitating internalization of the practice and use of monitoring and evaluation information in the SADC region is enormous.

The next chapter is a continuation of this chapter and specifically explores the project cycle and some of the key issues considered as determining the success or failure of HIV and AIDS project efforts.

## CHAPTER 4 THE PROJECT CYCLE AND DETERMINANTS OF PERFORMANCE OF HIV AND AIDS PROJECTS

The chapter highlights the key features of the project cycle and the way it is understood and defined by project practitioners. It revisits and clarifies the stages of the cycle based on field responses and proposes a holistic view and interpretation of the project cycle. In addition, an in depth analysis of practitioners' perception of what determines the success or failure of HIV and AIDS projects is provided. The qualities of a successful project manager or "practitioner" are highlighted. The chapter ends with an analysis on the use of projects and project management as a social development methodology.

### 4.1 The Project Cycle

#### 4.1.1 Start and end of project

The general understanding of the start and end of a project was universal. Differences in the understanding of the start of a project were however noted in terminology used and in some cases categorization of stages, with notable overlaps between project conceptualization and design.

The majority (64%) of respondents associated **the start** of the project with "*the very conceptualization stage when first discussed with others in the organization and the funder..., designing and shaping the idea of what should be done. The idea must be tested by stakeholders through investigation (identify issues)...scanning the territory – familiarize yourself with the dimensions of the challenge that you are in*". This suggests that a project should be shaped and developed with beneficiaries and stakeholders from the very beginning. It should be shaped by the needs of the beneficiaries and within their own context. The idea of involving stakeholders further suggests that the concept should be systemic, taking on board other relevant issues within the system. These perceptions are in line with the conventional understanding of the project life cycle (Burke, 2003) in which the start of the project is characterized by assessment and analysis of the situation,

defining the problem and conducting the baseline and feasibility studies. Experience and observations tell us that projects concepts that are not informed by beneficiaries and other stakeholders risk being irrelevant and obsolete before they are implemented.

Overlap was noted in the perception of the start, with some practitioners emphasizing the development of the implementation plan; the availability of resources, appropriate personnel and the relevant logistics; and as one respondent echoed, *“but there is a point in saying it only starts when a budget is approved and allocated for roll-out”*. This was reiterated by one respondent who metaphorically compared the project start with a tap of water, *“it starts when funds start flowing and ends when funds stop flowing”*. This view associates projects with funding and mostly external funding as well as the beginning of visible transactional processes and functions and neglects some of the critical consultative processes that build the concept. In practice, this perception is evidenced by the fact that most donors do not provide funding for conceptualization and design processes and this often undermine the quality and ownership of projects by beneficiaries and stakeholders. This view can also be explained by the fact that most project managers are hired to drive the transactional or implementation aspects of projects that they would seldom have conceptualized and designed.

A few of the respondents considered projects to *“start anytime during the response because most projects are add-ons to what is already happening on the ground”*. To some extent, this view recognizes that most HIV and AIDS projects are a contribution or *“part of a bigger picture”* or system of ongoing efforts. Within this perception, the project and its intentions can not be divorced from past, ongoing and future efforts; the project emerges within a continuum rather than as an entity by and for itself. Its identity is discernible only in relation to the patterns of relationships between itself and other aspects of the bigger system. Like the pieces of a cornflower, it is a miniature, or microcosm of the bigger HIV and AIDS control system and therefore a part of a pattern of interventions. These perceptions suggest that the conceptualization of a project should be guided by an anthropological reflection of both historical and existing values of beneficiary communities and their inherent strategies for dealing with adversities and

uncertainty. This reflection should then guide project strategies based on what obtains within the community – something that the community can identify with, feel comfortable with and be able to take ownership. The challenge with most project development processes is that the concept comes from the expert external to the community, the donor, organizations or institutions with little or assumed understanding of the intended beneficiary communities and is hurriedly imposed as a solution on these unsuspecting communities. Most project concepts and intervention efforts can be seen more as “patches on a piece of cloth” than as part of the “original cloth” or system of community coping mechanism.

The understanding of the **end** of the project was also fairly similar with minor differentials. Again, 64% of the respondents perceived the end of a project as evident *“once the schedule of the project as per the implementing plan has been completed; when final deliverables are submitted; when all activities have been implemented and the time specified has been reached; when the final evaluation has been conducted and results handed over”*. Some respondents were sarcastic about the perception of “end” of the project, and noted that the project will still be considered to “end” or “close” *“although the virus and AIDS are still out there, and logically, continued activity in similar or modified vein is still required by you or somebody else”*. The “end” was also qualified to include *“when the project has reached its timeline, decisions are made whether to extend or close it”*.

A few respondents argued that the end of a project should depend on *“...whether or not deviations have not occurred to warrant further extension of implementation time frame”*. Other notable indicators of end of project included the completion of a summative evaluation; evidence of dissemination of the final outcomes or results; budget reconciliation report. Some evidence of ownership of the project by beneficiaries is also necessary to defining proper end of a project as well as *“tangible benefits” to communities...when people begin accessing services; when beneficiaries has taken over implementation and the sustainability plan kicks in, e.g. Government takes up funding of the project activities; and project team is dissolved”*. In reality most projects do not have

clear sustainability plans and in particular, those driven by non-governmental organizations are largely not even designed for take over by a permanent institution such as government. The end of such projects is dependant on donor funding and the given time frames than impact and sustainability. Such important end of project activities as dissemination of findings and experience are seldom budgeted for. A notable weakness implied by findings of this study is the absence of a process oriented exit strategy in most project designs. Project handover is seen more as an event than a process, undermining important issues such as transfer of skills and experiences to local communities to take over ownership and implementation, addressing issues of sustainability and other critical issues that may be outstanding.

#### **4.1.2 The concept of Project Life Cycle revisited**

About 90% of respondents indicated that a project has some kind of life cycle, arguing that “like life, there is beginning and an end to a project although it is not a linear path or simple trajectory; it can’t go on forever”. Respondents reiterated that the idea of cycle makes better sense where *“at end of project, you should plan for new or follow-up project... even if you continue with the same project, you need regular evaluation, adjusting of outputs, planning, etc”*. Within this perspective as one respondent put it, *“the idea of lifecycle doesn’t suggest project death per se. It can represent a continuous cycle of plan, implement, review, and back to start”*. Persuaded by this perception, the metaphor of “life cycle” appear to be misleading particularly in the implementation of social development projects.

According to some respondents, the idea of life cycle is dependant on the hands of the players in it for example, *“A CEO or municipal manager may like this HIV and AIDS project and as long as they are there, the project is alive and well, there is always scope for its extension and expansion ad infinitum. Until they suspend the current one and replace him/her with a new one who puts everything “on-hold”! Its life is on life-support! It’s a question of time or alternatively, the new CEO may breathe another lease of life”*.

The responses suggest that in reality, the idea of a life cycle is problematic because after the specified time line, even when evaluation has been carried out, it may not be possible to redesign the project to address weaknesses and shortcomings because the project would have been wound up and no resources allocated for continuity. If perceived from the real meaning of life and death, again, the metaphor of life cycle denotes that projects are born and die. The metaphor is also ambiguous and subject to different interpretations by different people depending with their context and circumstances. To this extent, projects are also interpreted, and implemented in ways that those responsible for them understand them. This diversity while to some extent healthy is problematic for HIV and AIDS control efforts where perception of performance becomes varied and subjective in as many ways as the number of people implementing HIV and AIDS control projects.

When requested to give a new name to the project life cycle, 55% of respondents were indifferent and did not make any proposals. Those who responded proposed that the project life cycle be named “project stages or project timeframe; project process - *“because it is within a programme and does not become an end in itself but is a means of reaching the end”*; project cycle *“in the sense that it is a continuous cycle for many types of projects”*. While recognizing that *“some projects have a definite life span, hence lifecycle”*, most respondents argued that in the case of *“HIV and AIDS, project may come to an end as a result of funding being exhausted...however, the initial challenges still remain”*. In this case, they argued that *“HIV and AIDS project does not necessarily have a full cycle because it ends somewhere rather than a cycle where you revisit, re-engineer, or restart the cycle all over. Project may not have an opportunity to re-design after review or evaluation...to address the weaknesses and gaps that remain”*. The responses further suggest that an HIV and AIDS project should be viewed as a process or part of a process, which should be continued for as long as the “problem exists”.

The researcher adopts the name “project cycle” and as will be highlighted and explained later on in this chapter, the name can be qualified as a “project spiral cycle”, denoting non linear and unpredictable path of continuity, patterns of dialogue, consensus building and reflective experiential learning and action processes.

### 4.1.3 Revisiting the stages of a project cycle

All respondents identified a project with some pattern of defined stages. The delineation of specific stages however varied. The responses were categorized and accommodated well into the contemporary four stages of the project cycle (Burke, 2003; PMBOK; APM) as follows:

a) **Conceptualisation**, was considered as characterized by identification of the problem, designing– developing or “shaping the idea”. The questions - whose problem is it; whose idea is it and who initiates and manages the process; are critical for projects to be useful and sustainable. There should be consultation with all stakeholders – “nurturing the idea” through “consultative dialogue”. The idea should be tested and validated through an **assessment and analysis** of the problem situation. This process would be followed by a **feasibility study** to explore possibilities of implementing the project and a **baseline study** to qualify and quantify the magnitude of the problem.

Some of the respondents emphasized the importance of the feasibility study as a stage separate from conceptualization or planning /design. This makes sense to some extent taking the perception that with HIV and AIDS, the problem is often known before hand and projects are built into an ongoing programme. In addition, it provides opportunities for anthropological analysis of community capacities and priorities to inform the type of strategies to be adopted in a particular situation and this would in turn shape the project. In this case, the feasibility study would enable conceptualization to be narrowed to the type of intervention that is chosen for implementation. The baseline study becomes more of a tool to take stock of areas that require priority and thus may replace the process of conceptualization in as far as it is identified with unique ideas and products. It also makes some sense if considered as symptomatic of most classic donor funded projects where the type of intervention is pre-determined by what donors prefer to fund e.g. prevention, orphan care or treatment, etc. Donors tend to “develop patterns or fashion of strategic priorities” of what to fund over time. For example as one participant noted, “*if President George Bush does not perceive condom promotion as the right thing, there will be no money for condom promotion from the American Government*” (World Bank –SACU

HIV and AIDS meeting). What this implies is that if one wants to access American Government funding for HIV and AIDS control, one has to choose among American Government concepts of what is fundable in HIV and AIDS. So the concept is often determined before hand, influenced by several external factors other than the priorities of the targeted community and divorced from the stakeholder participatory project development process as it should ideally proceed.

b) Once the idea is accepted and the magnitude of the problem established, “**planning**” takes place, which respondents described as characterized by; project designing; proposal writing and work planning - defining “how to do the project / show when activities will start and end / what has to be done, etc.”. Some respondents defined this as the “**Initiation** or getting started” and identified such activities as “setting objectives /developing logical frameworks and sourcing funds/ and selection of a donor (although sometimes funders/donors may specify what they want)”.

In reality, donors have priorities and they influence communities to take on those priorities. In such cases, fundraising /identifying donors and conceptualization are like “*chicken & egg controversy...what comes first, the donor or the concept*”. The donor identifies consultancy to come up with a proposal on behalf of the implementing organization – “*something like capacity building support where the implementing organization is deemed unable to develop a project proposal*”. In other instances, it is about which concepts are fashionable with which donors, “*in which case the proposal is tailor made to suit specific donors or ‘fashion’*”. NGOs are good at sensing donor priorities, swerving with them and aligning their “community priorities” to donor priorities, because “*essentially this determines their survival*”.

This phase is also characterized by mobilizing stakeholders understanding, support and participation and organizing the implementation environment.

The study suggests that any project intervention should have a clear and detailed plan of action, broken down into precise, specific deliverables and spelling out the goals, objectives, activities, timeframe, estimated costs, intended outputs, processes for

accountability and people responsible for follow-up, etc. To quote one respondent *“the plan presupposes astute familiarity with the territory”* and issues that the project is designed to address. The plan shouldn't be set in concrete and stone, and in fact, capacity to respond to unfolding environmental turbulence and emergence and adjust the plan must be a major guiding principle. In accordance with complexity theory, the project must be designed to keep the project “on the edge of chaos”, (a state in which it is neither in a stable and patterned comfort zone nor in a state of no control, but rather in the middle of the two). This state enables the project flexibility to learn, adapt, accommodate emergence and retain viability and competitiveness as implementation proceeds as opposed to being placed on a patterned rail with no options when the situation demands for change. The research notes that most project practitioners prefer to keep projects in orderliness (little or no change and adaptation) because as one respondent put it, *“In real life, diverting 50kilometres from one aspect of the project may require going through such a convoluted approval process that project practitioners familiar with such tedium would rather plod along (fingers crossed!) until the project fizzles out at the end of the financial year or allocated budget”*. Project practitioners generally refrain from introducing innovation and creativity to avoid turbulence and uncertainty

c) The **implementation** stage is characterized by “doing it”; coordination of activities by implementers. Respondents identified this stage with the role of project managers – the execution of the project. What is assumed by this association is that the function of the project manager is perceived as more as “transactional” than visionary and conceptualizing. In fact, as one respondent noted, “this is the common pattern in most organizations where a project manager is hired to facilitate, coordinate implementation of already designed projects with readily available plans”. The project manager therefore has to fit themselves within the theoretical and paradigmatic framework of the project design. This fit can not always be assumed to be a perfect match as project managers may come into the project with their own perspectives and worldviews which will only become apparent after they have taken the job. Problems can arise in cases where the worldviews of the project manager do not always align to the paradigmatic orientation of the project design.

This phase is characterized by ongoing monitoring, reviews and process evaluations, “*which may result in planning...redesign ... modification*”.

d) The final or End of project stage was defined as characterized by **Handover or Closure** –This happens simultaneously, “*including supporting capacity building for takeover*”. A few respondents highlighted the idea of developing an **exit strategy** that would guide the execution of this stage. A distinct feature of this stage which is almost never planned and budgeted and could be addressed in the exit strategy is “*planning for sustainability or carry-over*”. Some respondents proposed that it be a distinct stage of the project cycle. Planning for sustainability presupposes some kind of reflection towards the end of the project when the project team begins to think about what happens when the project is “**closed**”. According to PMBOK, this plan should be informed by the **project summative or impact evaluation**. The reference by many respondents to the end of project as “project closed” has metaphorical significance to project management. It suggests a comparison of the project to a door or a book which can be closed. The end of project stage should look beyond the closure of the door. In fact, the concept of a sustainability plan presupposes vision beyond the closure. Ironically, the sustainability plan suggests that there is continuity beyond the closure...that the closure is an opening of a new horizon. It’s a point of reflection – fusing knowledge derived from the project and giving it meaning to inform future efforts. It is about concretizing learning and discerning lessons and experiences of relevance to the future.

Planning for sustainability presupposes that what is handed over at the end of the project is not just the experiences or products of the project, but also a plan for using these experiences, the knowledge obtained, the learning acquired to inform the future. This can **be represented by a spiral loop – reflection loop on what the writer considers as a better representation of the project cycle.**

A significant number of respondents identified project monitoring and evaluation as a separate stage of the project cycle. The problem with this is that monitoring and

evaluation become considered as a “thing” separate from informing efficiency and effectiveness of project process and performance. Monitoring and evaluation are like “sensors” or “detectors” of performance. Rather than being perceived as separate stages, evaluations are ongoing processes that must be built into the entire cycle of the project. Apart from sensing the impact of the project, evaluations serve to inform and validate or refine the exit strategy and sustainability plan. It serves to inform the design of the bridge between the processes of the current project and the processes of projects that come after it. It serves to take the project into the future beyond its ordinarily recognized “life span”. For those who believe in project life cycles as denoting “birth and death”...the impact evaluation and the subsequent sustainability plan symbolizes continuity and eternal life or permanent learning and application of project lessons and experiences by the beneficiary community and project stakeholders. The successful project must influence the future, and live as a spiritual shadow, a source of reflection and discerning good practice from bad practice. It can not be an end in itself. Any successful project cannot be an end in itself otherwise its success would be cosmetic.

The responses suggest that a project is a spiral cycle, which involves overlaps between one phase and the other. Sometimes, one has to go back to address issues in the previous phase, and so on. It is not linear but has loops indicating reflection processes. The cycle does not end. The ending of one phase of a project is the beginning of another phase. It is evolving and transformational. Projects are built on what is existing experiences and practices and not on a vacuum. The starting point of a project builds on previous –long lived efforts by communities; built on experiences – the project creates its own experiences and feed into new experiences. It’s a process of evolving experiential learning and consciousness. The end of the project is an arbitrary end as in fact, it’s the beginning of transference of learning to other forms of HIV and AIDS control efforts as well as new follow-up projects. To realize this, a clear exit strategy should be developed at the beginning of the project and reviewed towards the end (See insert 1).

From the experiences of selected project practitioners in the SADC region, most evaluations lack provision for “*transfer of learning*” of project experiences to

stakeholders and *“often, what is missed in the objectives of monitoring and evaluation processes is the subsequent process of dissemination – getting the findings out there”*.

This situation often emanate from the low priority given to monitoring and evaluation in most projects and in particular, planning for project completion and a principled exit that assures sustainability and respect for human rights and the inherent dignity of individuals and communities targeted by the project efforts. The monitoring and evaluation framework should facilitate learning and use of experiences well beyond the project has ended through establishing a “sustainability plan” with the targeted communities. To ensure effective quality measurement and control, any HIV and AIDS monitoring and evaluation framework is expected to take into consideration, Lambert (1996)’s suggestion that monitoring and evaluation (diagnosis) of the project should take at least 20% of the Project Manager’s time instead of the average 2% . Monitoring and evaluation should be ingrained in project management efforts such that it becomes a pattern of behavior that defines the qualities of a project practitioner in addition to being a planned event.

## **Insert 2: Ethical principles of project exit**

Recognizing the importance of a planned end of project process and the neglect that this stage of the project has tended to be accorded in project design, the researcher is proposing that every social development /HIV and AIDS project should articulate an exit strategy. Projects must serve as platforms for development into the future, as one development specialist noted, “Projects must meet a felt need of the community and improve performance, not be an end for themselves. Projects that serve as an end in themselves create ‘victims’ of social development efforts and a ‘dependency triangle’. As **development workers**, we frequently approach communities with a problem-solving mentality. We rarely ask what our target group can do. We focus on what they can not do, or what they need. We play the ‘savior” . Nchabeleng (2000).

The **overall purpose of the exit strategy** will be to define a road map towards completion of the project in a way that ensures smooth handover, effective transfer of lessons and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), and ownership of the products of the project by the key beneficiaries and stakeholders. The researcher proposes the following minimum **ethical principles to guide any HIV and AIDS project exit strategy**:

**Do no harm:** Project completion does not bring disrepute and harm to any individual or institution with a stake, either directly or indirectly, in the Project. The exit strategy should identify some of the ethical issues associated with improper project completion within the framework of promoting, protecting and fulfilling the universal human rights and

the inherent dignity of individual human beings, and in as far as possible, address any potential problems to minimize harm.

**Return on investment** (Millichamp, 1996) is realized by ensuring that all lessons and experiences are captured and channeled towards implementing and improving future national and regional efforts of the SADC response to HIV and AIDS. The exit strategy should facilitate learning and knowledge transfer between the technical partners and beneficiary organizations, Governments and SADC Secretariat. A forum should be provided to ensure that project lessons and experiences and in particular those activities “that work”, are built in the regional and national strategies and implementation plans. In addition, lessons and experiences should be distributed and shared to as large a network as is possible to maximize benefit and create opportunities to strengthen comprehensive, integrated HIV and AIDS responses through networking and collaboration between various stakeholders. It recognizes and seeks to address, Watson (2000)’s observation that many organizations fail to use evaluations, financial reports and narrative reports as a management tool to redesign, alter project scope or benchmark progress.

**Build capacity for sustainability:** Capacity gaps and preparedness for project take over, or scale up and sustenance of activities are identified and proposals made for remedial actions. This principle questions the moral and ethical value of interventions that create demand for certain products, services or social values in the short term, without capacitating communities to understand and embrace or apply this new knowledge in the long term. The result is that of communities developing a tendency of acquiring or accumulating knowledge (overwhelmed with knowledge and awareness), without skills and confidence to apply it in their lives. This is incapacitating, creating passive communities and high levels of dependency and helplessness. This principle calls for “developing client capabilities for future problem solving after the consultant has gone”, INTRAC (December 1996).

**Communicate End of Project,** to stakeholders, and any outstanding issues are negotiated and mutually agreed with stakeholders.

**Ownership:** ensure acceptance and common interpretation of Project Completion report by all key stakeholders. This entails participation of key stakeholders in the processes of project completion and implementation of exit strategy. It also means adherence to stewardship (Millichamp, 1996), fairness, integrity, INTRAC (December 1996) and accuracy in the preparation of the final report. It calls on projects to develop improved lives, not only in terms of material conditions on the ground, but also spiritual and psychological conditions; building not just technical skills, but motivation, decision-making abilities and analytical and conceptual abilities.

#### **4.1.4 The project cycle: a learning and spiral cycle**

The concept of a staged project cycle /process as defined in this study denotes consciousness to learn and take the experiences of one stage of the project cycle and feed them into the next stages and ultimately into other related ongoing project cycles or future efforts. The researcher suggests that this process of transferring lessons and experiences is not linear but spiral because it is characterized by loops of reflection on experiences between the stages of the project as espoused by the Learning Cycle. In that respect, and in line with arguments coming from this study and the researcher's bias for projects to be designed on systems thinking and practice, the researcher proposes that the "project lifecycle" be referred to as the "project spiral cycle". The project spiral cycle recognizes that each project is a unique experience, even if it exists within the same system and striving towards achieving the same goal. The experiences of any one project can be useful to inform subsequent or other project initiatives through transfer of experiential learning. With a project spiral cycle, all experiences from any project or its specific stages are understood to be continuous, that is, each experience influences other future experiences through reflection on experiences and transfer of experiential learning to subsequent project designs and planning. In this respect, the spiral project cycle resembles the learning cycle and as such the project cycle can be considered a learning cycle transformed from abstract to practical life.

The notion of a project spiral cycle is based on the assumption and observation that Life is a continuum with no clear beginning nor end. Projects seek to contribute to the improvement of this continuum. Because they are short term by their nature and small efforts relative to the magnitude of social problems such HIV and AIDS, projects should recognize that as individual entities, their contribution to the improvement of this continuum is limited. The notion of a project spiral cycle presupposes that there should be connectivity between preceding and successive projects. This connectivity, which is built on experiential learning, is in a way an attempt by projects to align with the bigger system representing the continuum of life. The closer the alignment and resemblance of

the project design is to this continuum, the more likelihood projects could have to making a lasting impact into improving this continuum.

Undertaking anthropological analysis of the evolutionary patterns of a community and its inherent coping systems could assist project designs to be established on learning and better understanding and alignment to the realities of life at any point during the project period. Understanding of a project as spiral cycles could enable project designs to respond to community priorities in ways that the communities understand and better identify with, enabling those communities to take ownership of development project processes as well as the results that come with them. Such ownership is critical to determining long term impact and sustainability of project contributions to the continuum. The spiral project cycle concept suggests that this connectivity is partly made possible through transfer and internalization of critical experiential learning. The manner in which this learning is handled and transferred determines whether the project will make any significant impact or not and whether such impact will be short or long lived.

For the projects to improve and make better impact, they must learn from experiences of the past or of other ongoing efforts around them. They must identify themselves with the “bigger” HIV and AIDS response system and recognize the natural linkages and overlaps that exist between them and the bigger system. They must develop mechanisms to strengthen and tap on these interrelationships between them and other various agents (systems and subsystems) of the bigger system. Most projects do just the opposite – existing as if they can take sole control of HIV and AIDS – existing in competition of each other, in competition for resources.

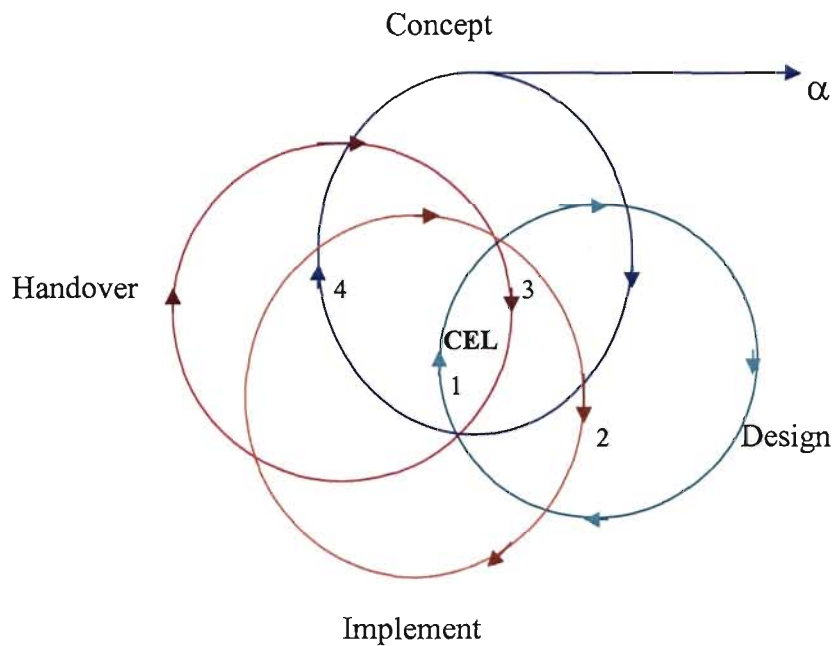
As will further be highlighted in subsequent paragraphs of this chapter, the researcher advances the argument that the project cycle is a cycle of experiential learning. It is both built through and builds on experiential learning of the past and current efforts of itself and other project efforts and should feed lessons into future efforts. It is from the recognition and embracing of this experiential learning that projects can improve on their design and performance over time. The definition of project as time bound with no

further follow-up “beyond the end date” and the argument built on responses in this study suggest that failure by individual organizations to recognize and build their efforts on lessons and experiences of other efforts as espoused by the project spiral cycle leave most HIV and AIDS projects in stagnation and isolated from those of others in the HIV and AIDS response system. This could be one of the major reasons behind the low impact of HIV and AIDS efforts as evidenced by continued increase in new infections.

The researcher argues that the project cycle is not linear, and predictable, but a spiral of ongoing, revolving and evolving interconnected patterns and processes of thought and action embedded with uncertainty. It follows a spiral of interconnected and interwoven patterns which provide for reflection and feedback loops before moving from one stage or cycle to the other. The lines and arrows in figure 2 show the pattern and direction of flow but as figures 3 and 4 depicts, these arrows should not be interpreted as fixed thought or action processes but as clarifying the direction of processes. The arrows marked 1,2,3 and 4 indicate movement through to the next stages and suggest that satisfactory work will have been done in the preceding stage before moving to the next stage. As depicted in figure 4, the spirals will build up for as long as work has not been considered satisfactory at that stage. The density of the spirals suggests the amount of time, effort and dialogue or consultation that will have taken place at that stage. It is the ability to recognize, interpret, understand and influence this spiral pattern of interconnected processes and behaviours that enables successful project practitioners to unravel complexity and be able to direct the project towards success.

**Figure 2: The stages of the project cycle and feed back loops**

Adapting the four stages of the project cycle (Burke, 2003), the researcher presents a model to interpret the project cycle in terms of feedback loops of experiential learning. The cycle is not a physical thing that can be touched, but an event and series of events that is recognizable and discernible through the patterns of interaction and relationships between its stages and specific thought processes and actions within the stages. Thought processes and actions at one stage should relate and consider effect of and on other stages.



**Key:**

**CEL:** Critical Experiential Learning

**Arrow 1:** Represent a move from concept to design

**Arrow 2:** Represent a move from design to implement

**Arrow 3:** Represent a move from implement to hand over

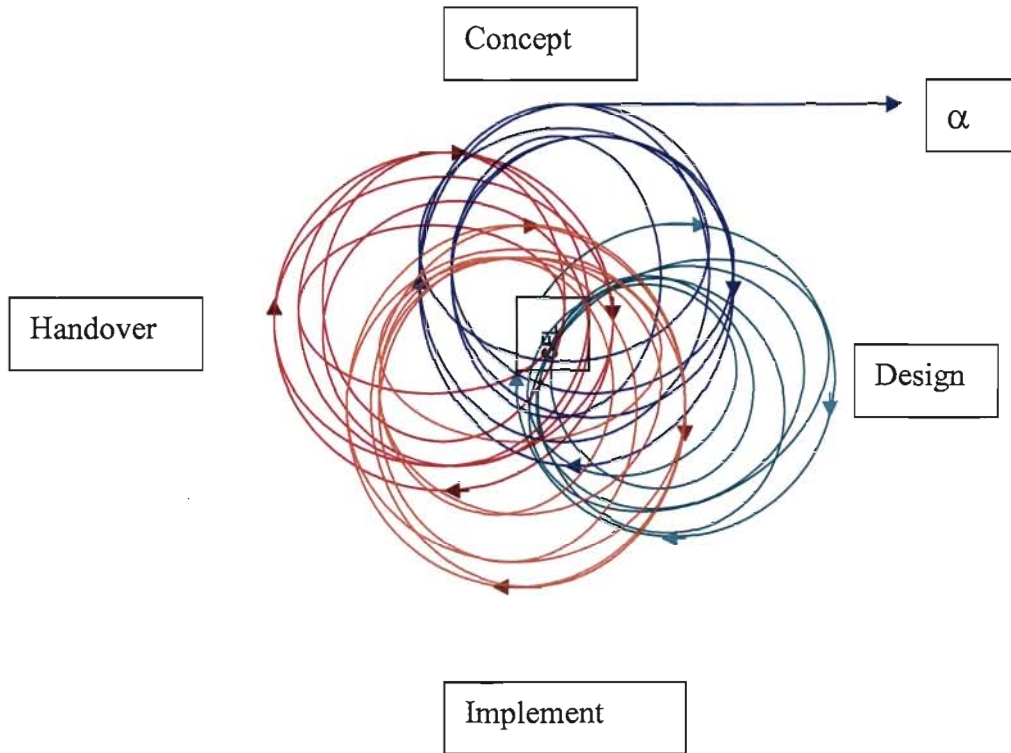
**Arrow 4:** Represent a move from handover to concept (of a new project – taking along CEL to improve on succeeding or other existing project

**α** represents cumulative transfer of experiential learning. It represents continuity of efforts of the preceding project through its improved successor

Ironically, it is clear from the responses of this study and from project management practice that with most projects the movement from one stage of the project to the other, as indeed the decisions to end a project are determined more by time and resource constraints than by the satisfactory completion of a stage or project. Project completion is not so much determined by collective consensus based on experiential learning through dialogue between all stakeholders within the project system. Some stakeholders are more powerful than others. In particular, donors and technical and implementing organizations tend to use their monetary and technical strengths to make determine what constitute development priorities, successful performance, and end of projects on behalf of beneficiaries or local communities. It would appear that there is something wrong in the current social development paradigm and methodologies that relegates poor beneficiary communities as subjects of charity and subsequently passive recipients of donations with little negotiations on how those donations can best be channeled to improve their lives. It would appear that most project designs do not adequately tap on cumulative experiential learning from other projects and the communities that they pertain to serve. In any case, much of project conceptualization and design is led and done by “development experts” drawn from the comfort of high rise office blocks in city centers in most cases with no links to the targeted community.

The spirals in figures 3 and 4 suggest that HIV and AIDS projects should be designed not as rigid, linear patterns of thought and action processes, because they exist in an environment of uncertainty and interrelationships. They should be designed as flexible and adaptive systems, whose paths (spirals) are negotiated through dialogue and consensus along most plausible options, adjusting to emergence at any time or stage during the course of the project. The role of the project leader and team is to facilitate or drive the project along the best options through a process of reflection, dialogue and consensus building. The relevance of each stage is defined by the value and nature of its connectivity or interrelationship with both preceding and succeeding stages.

**Figure 3: Project cycle showing the spiral nature of project processes in each stage**

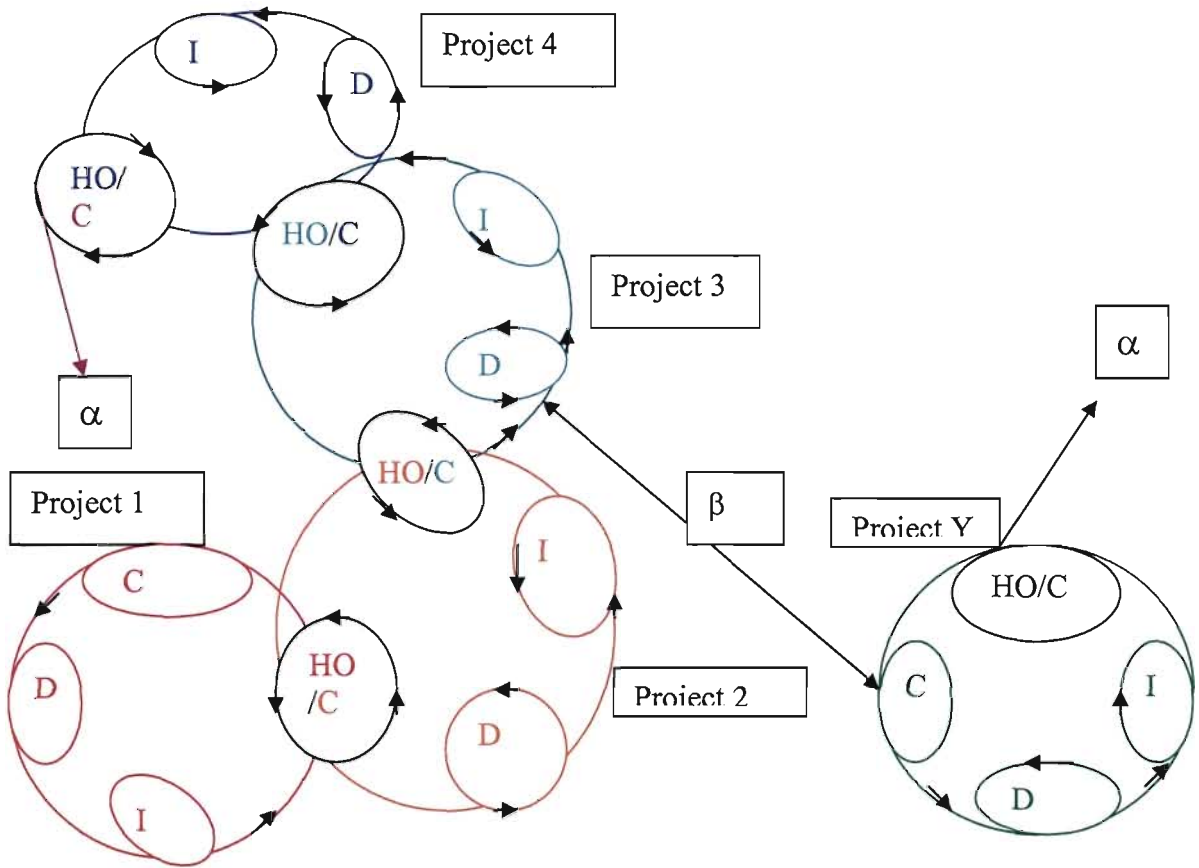


In figure 3, the researcher proposes a model to elaborate on the spiral nature of the project cycle. The several cyclical lines under each stage indicate the spiral processes or patterns of ongoing dialogue within each stage of the cycle. The spirals begin from the inside and expand outwards as more dialogue or interaction or action within that stage of the project build into more consensus and satisfaction of progress. As collective consensus is built around attainment and satisfaction with performance, the spirals move outwards and eventually overlapping (intersecting) with the next stage (s). As figure 3 shows, the cycle represented in figure 2 is not necessarily a single clean path or option, but is built from several spirals of thought and action processes and efforts within and between the stages of the cycle.

A leap to the next stage, connected by a loop, suggests that the dialogue or patterns of interaction in the preceding stage has resulted in some level of collective consensus between the stakeholders involved, and satisfaction that what has been done and decided in that stage can be translated into the next phase with minimal risk of failure or of producing unintended negative effect in the immediate to long term. According to the researcher, the number or density of spiral lines in each stage suggests the level of effort and dialogue, which may determine the amount of time taken to reach collective consensus within that stage. The role of the project manager is to facilitate project processes to ensure that the desired performance is achieved taking into consideration the project time frame. The project manager should use his/her judgment to establish the adequacy and acceptability of project performance towards the desired performance and the conduciveness of project processes to graduate into the next stage. But as the spiral project cycle and the learning cycle suggest, such decisions should ideally be made as a result of action, reflection and dialogue with or among stakeholders. This action and dialogue is represented by the cyclical spirals.

As figure 3, 4 and 5 depicts, there should be continuity and connectivity from one stage to another and from one project to its successor. The loops between the different set of stages indicate transfer of knowledge, lessons and experiences from one project to another, and the process continues, with new projects building on as long as the “problem exist”. This suggests that future projects should be informed by reflection on previous projects and that future projects should therefore perform better than their predecessors. This is not the case with most HIV and AIDS projects today. Organizations and project practitioners do not appear to be learning enough as a result of factors that influence project design and delivery such as donor driven project design frameworks, time and resource constraints and competing design frameworks introduced by international expert organizations without a solid paradigmatic foundation and anchorage that is conducive to continuous learning. In addition, there is no common theoretical or paradigmatic foundation on which such learning can be built.

**Figure 4: The spiral pattern of the project cycle and transfer of learning through a series of projects**



**Key:**

$\beta$ , represent sharing of lessons and experiences in between stages of two different project cycles being conducted simultaneously. Although project Y could be implemented by a different organization from the one implementing successive projects 1-4 above, Y can learn from both general and very specific experiences of any of projects 1-4 at any time in the duration or stages of any of those projects.

**C:** concept

**D:** design

**I:** implement

**HO:** hand over

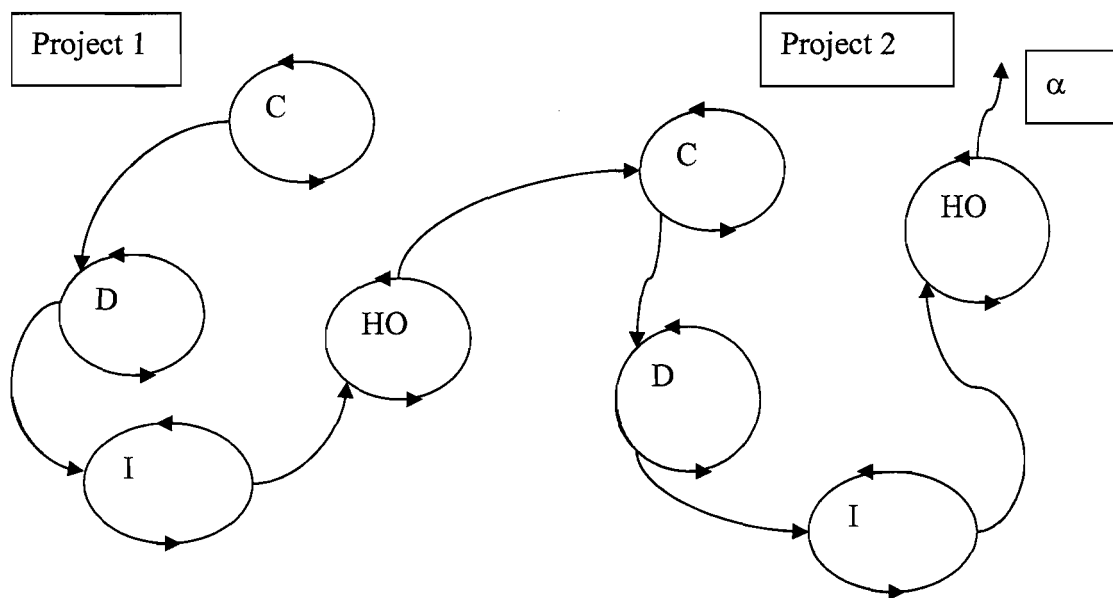
In figure 4, the researcher presents a model that shows an HIV and AIDS intervention being sustained over a long period of time through subsequent but related projects implemented by the same or other organizations in a targeted community “for as long as the problem exists”. Subsequent projects are developed from experiential learning derived from the preceding project (s). The symbol  $\alpha$  in figures 4 and 5 indicate that for HIV and AIDS control efforts, the number of future project efforts is not predictable because the dynamics, patterns and trends of the epidemic are not known and the end of the problem is not foreseen. Current project designs frameworks appear to suggest “end or closure of project” as if the problem of HIV and AIDS would have been permanently addressed at the time of ending the project. While this mechanistic assumption could be made on a project to construct a physical infrastructure such as a bridge, it certainly does not apply in the case of HIV and AIDS and most social development projects.

Unless related follow up projects are connected to the spiral as represented by  $\alpha$  there is no sustainability to previous interventions beyond their completion date, because new donor funds and project interventions coming through would not be based on the lessons and experiences of their predecessor (s). For example, even in cases where the same line of intervention such as behavior change communication is introduced through a new project in the same community, absence of connectivity through  $\alpha$  would result in the pattern of lessons and experiences generated by the preceding project being wasted and not being used and perpetuated in the new project. This suggests that a key issue or indicator of effective project performance should be the measurement of the extent to which projects are built on and take forward the experiences of previous projects or community efforts.

As the bi directional arrow marked  $\beta$  in figure 4 suggests, the transfer of experiential learning is not necessarily limited to one stage of the same project cycle or between two project cycles coming one after the other. Such learning can also occur between a stage of one project cycle such as the design stage for project cycle 3 and the concept stage of project cycle Y even though these projects may be designed and implemented by different institutions in different environments. In such cases,  $\beta$  would represent

networking and collaboration and or joint planning in the case of two or more projects conducting and sharing their handover processes simultaneously. In the case of organizations running several HIV and AIDS projects simultaneously or otherwise through programmes, such relationship should be maintained between the different projects and collectively inform the future direction of the programme.

**Figure 5: Clarification of the spiral nature of consecutive project cycles**



In figure 5, the researcher presents a model indicating that the spiral does not only occur between stages of the same project cycle, but also from one project to another. Several consecutive and parallel projects can behave and interact in this spiral pattern, with new project cycles overlapping those conducted in prior years. This is made possible through use of documented lessons and experiences; evaluation reports; reports of anthropological studies conducted on communities in which the preceding projects were implemented which may also identify other useful inter-generational community patterns of development mechanisms and coping with adversities not necessarily related to any recollected project; the hiring of project managers from other organizations that may have

implemented similar interventions; consultations and other means of networking and sharing experiences.

As figure 2 depicts, there are several points of intersection or reflection loops between two or more and between all the stages in the cycle, which represent points of reflection and experiential learning. At the beginning of a particular stage (say design stage) the level of learning represented by the intersection between the stages, is largely in terms of transfer of experiences from the previous concept stage which will be complemented by the recent experiences from the design stage itself or as illustrated in figure 4, experiences from other project initiatives. With further interaction or as the project progresses through more stages over time, and interacts with other ongoing projects or experiences (as depicted by the lines marked  $\beta$  on figure 4) more phases intersect (figure 3) representing deeper learning. The inner or core intersection of all the stages (**CEL**) is the ultimate project impact and experiences – representing ultimate learning and reflection. The lessons and experiences represented by this loop or intersection represent what should be carried over to inform the next project cycle or shared with other ongoing or new related projects as indicated by  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ .

The illustrations in figures 1 to 5 also suggest that project practitioners should at any stage of the cycle reflect on the effects of their decisions and actions during that stage, to the entire cycle and other development parameters within the system. For example, during conceptualization, the team should have a general idea around how the concept relates to the design, implementation and hand over processes. In particular, the conceptualizing team should have more specific ideas around the design process and design framework. As illustrated in figures 2 and 3, the intersection between concept and design depicts the learning, experiences and ideas that result from the reflection between the concept stage in relation to the design stage. A move to the design stage suggest that there has been collective consensus and that the team is satisfied that the concept can be transformed into the design as indeed having the general idea that the concept can be implemented and the products of the efforts ultimately handed over and sustained.

Similarly, the loop which intersects the design and the implementation also reflects the learning and reflection that informs the implementation of the design framework. And, as the spiral indicates, it is also important that during implementation, the project team reflects on the continued synergy and match between implementation methods and priorities and both the design, concept and handover stages. It is not like once you get to one stage, “you close the door behind” the other stage. For a complex problem such as HIV and AIDS, good project management practice entails the ability to continue to reflect on the entire cycle at any stage during project implementation. The loops and overlaps represent flexibility and provision to adapt project processes to emergence. The connections represented by the loops suggest that the project and all the processes that constitute its cycle is a complex system. The entire project as a system is a sum of its individual components and can not be divorced from any of them in the case of a successfully managed project. For the project to perform properly, all the components should continue to be functionally active through out the project cycle.

As a system, the project owes to its stages (subsystems) for its functionality and performance. Each stage also comprise of sub-subsystems which informs it. For example, the concept is informed by sub-subsystems such as the situation assessment and analysis, the baseline study, etc, which also remains reference centers for the project team to measure progress through out the duration of the project. Similarly, the handover is a process and not an event. It comprises of its own sub-subsystems such as end of project impact evaluation, final knowledge transfer process, sustainability plan (the draft plan should have been envisaged at the very beginning of the project and can be refined at this stage), financial or resource audit, etc. In the case of HIV and AIDS, where the end of the project does not translate to the end of the problem, the handover stage or process should also entail the beginning of another concept to continue programme efforts through a related project as depicted by  $\alpha$ . In such cases, the line between the handover, concept and design stages become very fluid, particularly in cases where bridging funds are made available for the next phase of the project and no break experienced. This should be the case with HIV and AIDS projects.

It is the ability of the project stakeholders to move forward experiences and lessons from the reflection loops to the next stage of the cycle, and from one project to other on going or new projects that determine sustainability and impact of project successes. And to the extent that this is done, the inner most reflection loop (CEL) suggest that with HIV and AIDS control efforts (where the problem is of an indefinite duration) the project's life does and should not come to an end, but be transformed from one level of effort to the other through experiential learning.

The spiral project cycle suggest that projects should be developed as part of a systemic process of human experiencing which is continuously informed and improved through learning shared between the various agents and processes of a bigger system. And even if for example, the problem of HIV and AIDS was to be solved today, the experiences of dealing with an epidemic of such magnitude could still be transferred and be relevant to informing solutions to other existing or future problems big or small. The researcher argues that project design frameworks should be built on anthropological analysis of lessons, experiences of communities in coping with adversities throughout their history, rather than solely on "expert" driven ideas and perceptions of what works or might work - as currently exemplified by most donor driven concepts and "fashionable" concepts driven by international organizations. In the majority of cases, inadequate or no effort is made to test local context relevance as is the case in current HIV and AIDS project management practice.

The researcher advises project practitioners to abandon the perception of "project closure" and adopt the idea of "transformational spiral project cycles" that progress through different and self improving phases and cycles, sustained by continued mobilization of resources to pursue specific interventions that are perceived to be making impact, and in the case of HIV and AIDS, "until the problem is solved".

The challenge with most current projects is that they are driven by donors in terms of resources, time and in some cases ideas, to the extent that a set of interventions and pattern of relations and interactions of a given effort that may be performing well, is

forced to end or “close” irregardless of its potential for positive social transformation. So, when the organization identifies a new donor, a new project is introduced, starting afresh with its new concepts (because as characteristic of most projects, the new donor brings in their own conditions) and taking a different direction from that of the preceding project with no connectivity through the spiral loop. This exemplifies a waste of effort and resources and worse still, has negative impact on the potential of the community to sustain their own coping mechanisms as they become testing grounds for unstained, short term competing ideas and concepts tested or implemented successively, each over short periods of time. This situation calls for increased **harmonization of donor funding and technical assistance** in social development efforts at any level - regional, national and community to enable development efforts to be coordinated, targeted and built previous efforts.

The research suggests that the overriding assumption to guide project design and implementation frameworks should be that **communities are better able to identify with their own patterns of experiential learning derived from their immediate or long term past**. To the extent that this is acceptable, social development projects must be built on and be identified with past and current patterns of community practice and experiential learning.

The study suggests that in HIV and AIDS control efforts, the adoption of the concept of a spiral project cycle built on reflection on experiential learning could facilitate improvement of methods for learning from the past and strengthen the practice of project monitoring, evaluation and documentation of project lessons and experiences . Reflective experiential learning enables organizations to identify and confront and move through this problem. Unfortunately, it would appear that some projects tend to avoid fundamental causes of problems, setting their targets and performance measurements within easily achievable levels even if this compromises the overall impact on the epidemic. The poor levels of both the understanding and application of monitoring and evaluation by National AIDS Commissions and most organizations working on HIV and AIDS in the SADC region (World Bank –SACU HIV and AIDS meeting) suggest that

learning could be compromised in projects. Even in cases where monitoring and evaluation is consciously embedded into the project design framework, its application is in-adequate (World Bank –SACU HIV and AIDS meeting). Taking a spiral project cycle approach suggest that confronting and addressing difficulties can make project practitioners and stakeholders become better aware of their situation. Better learning, tolerance and taking control is enhanced when emerging from complex and painful situations.

Covey suggests that problems can be classified into three categories: Direct control (problems involving our own behavior), Indirect control (problems involving other people's behavior), or No control (problems we can do nothing about). To be successful HIV and AIDS practitioners should understand the different levels of problems and explore and build relationships to try and address problems of any nature.

HIV and AIDS project management needs to strengthen its capacity to confront problems by acknowledging that HIV and AIDS is a complex epidemic that requires more than ordinary approaches to confront it, and as Taylor and Singh (unpublished paper) reminds us, "it is therefore not sensible to plan or manage projects as if they are simple and controllable". Writing on lessons derived from the disaster on Mount Everest, Robert (2002) reminds us that we should learn from the terrible failure experiences of others. When we design, manage and evaluate projects, we should take into cognizant of Roberto's observation that "we can not think about individual, group, or organizational levels of analysis in isolation. Instead, we need to examine how cognitive, interpersonal, and systemic forces interact to affect organizational processes and performance". In addition, "we need to recognize multiple factors that contribute to large-scale organizational failures and to explore the linkages among the psychological and sociological forces involved at the individual, group and organizational system level". HIV and AIDS projects need to refrain from competition and build networks and partnerships that enable ongoing conscious reflection and learning from each other's experiences.

The concept and practice of “action research” should be reinforced and improved on in the management of HIV and AIDS projects, along the lines of conscious experiencing of existence or reflective learning and action, as according to Kolb (1984) ’s Learning Cycle, “failure of many efforts result from making repeated mistakes or inability to learn from experience”. The Learning Cycle is rooted in the belief that “The more often we reflect on a task, the more often we have an opportunity to modify and refine our efforts”.

To be successful, project managers should not avoid complexity, but confront it and become part of it, not in resignation and despair, but in an effort to understand it. In messy situations, some solutions can be disguised as problems. Unless we confront these situations and understand them fully, sometimes we miss opportunities for growth. The descriptions of a good project manager provided in this study suggests that the ability to define, interpret and address complexity within the context of the greater good can distinguish successful leadership. Failure to address root causes appears to underly failure of social development projects; we see recurring problems germinating, each time, with a higher level of complexity.

Experience has shown that with HIV and AIDS projects, every effort or stage has risk, either in the design of the Project (inherent), its management (internal) or a result of outside forces (external). The Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants - ACCA, (2001) define risk in two ways, firstly as “the chance that something will go wrong” This implies that taking a risk means doing something that could turn out to be damaging. On the other side risk is perceived as “having to take the rough with the smooth...actual returns or benefits might turn out to be either better or worse than expected”. The scale and size of any risk is seen to depend on “both its probability of occurring and its impact”. While most HIV and AIDS project formulations go through an assessment of possible risk, ACCA has taught us that any risk management system can only provide reasonable assurance that objectives will be met. It can not eliminate the possibility of poor management decisions, human error, unforeseen circumstances arising, fraud, or the deliberate circumvention of controls, acts of nature, sabotage, etc.

In the design and management of HIV and AIDS projects, risk, cannot therefore be avoided because life by its very nature involves risk. We learn from the experiences of business management that, "...plans must be flexible so that they can quickly and easily be modified in the light of events" The College of Professional Management (1997). April, et al (2000), further remind us that, "at work, we are discovering that in planning exercises, it is no longer the planning of the plan that counts, because we have learned that the plan will be outdated before the year is over. We have to come to see that it is the process of planning, the being together, that is the result that we want: finding out what the world looks like from someone else's vantage point; finding out how an action will impact on people seven generations from now...the most important becomes the act of engaging in conversation and dialogue with others and creating the vision".

Because root causes of HIV and AIDS are complexly intertwined with other key problems, they are not easy to address and they require more time, resources and effort, which may not be available within the realms of specific project formulations. They require collective, endless effort. The tendency in such difficult cases is to identify easy targets, which bring immediate solutions. However, Taylor and Singh remind us that such short-term success would be a recipe for bigger and complicated problems in the long term.

The proactive approach to a mistake according to Covey (1997) is to acknowledge it instantly, correct and learn from it. One would suggest that HIV and AIDS project practitioners should (to use Covey's words) "recognize problems as opportunities, a chance to build emotional bank accounts...opportunities to deeply understand and help others, which applies to all personal relationships in the family, with workers and customers. What matters most is how we respond to what we experience in life". It would appear that our misjudged, reductionist, individualistic and personalized approaches to HIV and AIDS as evidenced by competition for project resources between organizations working on HIV and AIDS and use of competing strategies, could be making efforts to address the epidemic more difficult.

## 4.2 Determinants of performance

The study identifies several factors which are perceived by project practitioners to be key determinants to the performance of HIV and AIDS projects in the SADC region.

Depending on the type, magnitude and circumstances surrounding the project, each factor may be critical to the success or failure of a project by itself or in combination with others. While it may not be exhaustive, this section can be a useful checklist for project practitioners when developing and implementing projects. The determinants of performance include availability of resources, skills for managing relationships and individual project practitioner and organizational attributes and capacities, the environment in which projects are implemented, paradigmatic and theoretical orientation and recognition of the systemic nature of HIV and AIDS, among others.

### 4.2.1 Resources

- i. Availability of adequate material and financial resources to fund and support project activities. Projects may fail because they are poorly funded or are funded for too short a period to make impact. As one respondent noted, *“the beginning and end of most projects is also tied to when funds ‘start flowing’ and when they get finished irregardless of whether objective is achieved or not”*.
- ii. Competent, committed and adequate project team members (staff) and sound technical expertise should be provided for. *“People who purport to drive such projects must be knowledgeable of the issues themselves and of course not necessarily to the extent of virologists”*. Capacity of staff should continuously be improved. The project manager /leader should be competent. Employing inexperienced project teams with low technical skills result in poor quality of project design and delivery.
- iii. A project requires a fulltime coordinator /facilitator to allow planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Some organizations and government departments bring in resources for HIV and AIDS interventions without the corresponding human resources to drive the projects. As a result, no one in the organization is committed to the project, which in most cases, would

be assigned as add on to personnel who already have other fulltime responsibilities. The same applies to HIV and AIDS service organizations. New projects are added onto existing personnel's portfolios even if they are already burdened with other responsibilities and projects. Most donors would like to provide funds to finance activities with no corresponding financing for human resources to drive these resources. This is one of the greatest causes of imbalances between organizational resources available and capacity to utilize the resources effectively. The result is that at the end of the project time frame, organizations have implemented a fraction of the plan and utilized a small fraction of the total budget allocated for the project. The balance of the funding end up being retained by the donor, with such criticism as "*the recipient does not require further funding because they can not use it*" and yet the HIV and AIDS epidemic continues to grow.

- iv. Team work /spirit and support to team members are critical. The project team should be the right team including project manager and coherent. Wrong team members, absence of team work and commitment to productivity and low levels of discipline among team members is tantamount to failure.

#### **4.2.2 Planning**

- i. Project design frameworks must be flexible to accommodate emergence. Rigidity in design makes projects unable to adapt to changing environment, resulting in projects "missing the goal post".
- ii. Realistic targets and outputs must be set as one respondent noted, "*It is no use planning to reach the moon when you can't afford a spaceship and you are not an astronaut*". Poor conceptualization of the project goals and aims and poor operationalisation of the project are some of the ingredients for project failure.
- iii. Project plans and designs must be appropriately grounded in formative research and appropriate theoretical framework. Planning is important to project delivery. The plans must be clear and project strategies and designs must be evidence based, informed by community needs. Poor planning "*e.g. failure to*

*draw work plans to define what is to be done, timeliness, resources and people to be held responsible*” fail projects.

- iv. Project exit should be a planned process with handover processes designed for beneficiaries to be able to take over responsibility and sustain project activities where continuity is required. The exit strategy implementation plan should be designed to ensure a project completion and handover process that complies with basic ethical and human rights principles of human development efforts. It would appear that most projects do not include project exit plans into their design frameworks. The study suggests that project exit planning is often associated and limited to the presentation of a final progress report and therefore not enough time and resources are budgeted for it. What is provided for in most cases is a budget for impact evaluation and financial audit.

Project delivery plans must be realistic to avoid pressure on most donor funded organizations to keep “*funding flowing*” by portraying ideal pictures of success to donors even where they do not exist. Performance measurement frameworks and processes should be designed to discourage such situations and compel organizations implementing HIV and AIDS projects to acknowledge failure of projects when it occurs.

#### **4.2.3 Timely implementation.**

- i. Time is of essence in project management. All donor funds are tied to a time frame. In fact, in the majority of cases, time and not delivery, is the single most important thing that determines when a project finishes. Donor funding is tied to funding cycles in the host country. Once the set date of project completion is reached, the project has to end. Timely implementation applies during the course of implementation as well. While plans may not always be adhered to due to several extenuating circumstances, the project team should in as far as possible, ensure that activities are conducted at set times to avoid “*implementation rush*” towards the end of the project when all outstanding activities will be pushed for implementation. This practice often results in poor

quality of work and fatigue for the project team, stakeholders and project beneficiaries, who would often be required to attend workshops, week in week out.

#### **4.2.4 Creativity**

- i. Projects should avoid relying on standard prevention activities such as condom distribution, etc, but looking at addressing more structural factors of HIV vulnerability as the study notes, *“There is more to programming than condoms and pamphlets for successful programmes e.g. VCT, nutrition and treatment”*. HIV prevention for instance, requires a lot of innovation to succeed. It is no wonder that after several years of bombarding the population with information and education materials and achieving knowledge and awareness levels of over 90% in most populations, HIV infection continue to rise. HIV and AIDS programmes, as one respondent noted *“should address more structural problems such as poverty, gender disparities, culture –values and norms, politics, which are often entrenched in people’s lives and determine individuals decision making and patterns of interaction and behavior”*. Because of their structural nature, such factors require interventions of the magnitude of what one respondent recommended as *“social movements or revolutions”* rather than the piecemeal, isolated interventions characteristic of most HIV and AIDS activities. Interventions must be built within societal systems and entrenched into cultural, socio-economic and political way of life.

#### **4.2.5 Leadership and management –knowledge, skills and practice.**

- i. Project teams belong to organizations. The project leader is often lower on the hierarchy of the organizational structure. While the project manager is accountable for project success, s/he often has limited authority and decision making powers within the organization, and is limited to the transactional aspect of management rather than the leadership. It is therefore crucial that senior management of the organization have an understanding of the projects and provide the leadership and support required to motivate those involved in the

project. This may sound easier with AIDS service organizations which specializes and survives on HIV and AIDS activities, but may not apply in private sector or government workplace programmes or some large intergovernmental organization whose primary role may not be HIV and AIDS where the Chief Executive Officer or head of department have little understanding and sometimes appreciation of HIV and AIDS (as a result of the stigma associated with it or lack of knowledge) or where HIV and AIDS projects are regarded as a cost function that does not generate revenue. As one respondent noted *“you find performance measurement relegated to a junior officer with little or no executive influence and control”*.

- ii. Financial management and accounting is one of the biggest problems affecting project delivery. Poor and untimely accounting may result in funding being discontinued; delay disbursements; result in extravagance and misdirected effort. Organizations must have strong financial management systems and procedures to avoid over /under utilization of resources.
- iii. Coordinated long term focus is required and as the study reckons, *“Uncoordinated knee-jerky responses cant deliver a credible result in the long term”*
- iv. Good networking, coordination, collaboration and understanding at all levels:  
Good collaboration and relationships amongst those involved in the project is essential. It is also essential for those involved to understand the project and fully support its implementation;
- v. Trust between all stakeholders is critical to success
- vi. Donor driven leadership of projects often lead projects to pursue priorities of the donors rather than local priorities.
- vii. Good strategic planning is required to eliminate confusion and lack of focus

For an elaboration of the qualities expected of a project manager, see insert 3.

### **Insert 3: The Ideal Project Manager**

Social development projects are complex and therefore require complex skills to manage them successfully. Respondents identified a number of very specific attributes as characteristic of the ideal project manager, which were clustered under headings below:

#### **Leadership**

- Visionary and strategic thinker,
- Goal and result oriented: Should look into the future and guide the project into the future. "Personal goals should be consistent with project goals". This suggests that project managers should look beyond the timeframe of the project.
- Systemic and "*be able to see the bigger picture*" of relationships and interconnectedness associated with their projects.
- Preparedness to serve; people centered
- Be insightful, "*people oriented*" and "*motivate followers to carry out assignments as planned*". Be able to establish an organizational culture among team members conducive to harmonious working relationship and project delivery. Should be a team player and be able to coordinate partners and people involved in the project

#### **Mental abilities**

- Realistic planner and thinker: Project practitioners should possess mental abilities beyond following steps and procedures. They should have analytic skills and be able to identify underlying causalities of problems as well as possible solutions. They should view the world beyond the logic of their physical environment.
- Project practitioners should be "reflective thinkers" whose actions are influenced by experiences around them.
- A learner
- Problem solving abilities

#### **Interpersonal skills**

- Project practitioners should possess good organizing, networking, mobilizing and coordination skills to bring together the various stakeholder relationships and direct them into a pattern that brings maximum benefit to the project. They should be able to delegate responsibilities.
- Good communication and people skills
- Good listener
- Adaptive, flexible
- Good sense of humor
- Public relations
- Conflict management abilities

### **Professionalism**

- Accountability and stewardship over project resources. The manager should have financial management skills. Stewardship as defined by Millichamp (1996), is “the name given to the practice by which productive resources owned by one person or group are managed by another person or group of persons”. To be effective, HIV and AIDS managers must use what Covey (1997) refer to as stewardship delegation, which focuses on results instead of methods. People are able to choose the method to achieve the results”.
- Ability to control project processes and activities, monitor and evaluate project progress
- Integrity – honest and open about successes and failures;
- Respectful
- His/her actions and decisions must be even-handed and impartial (and seen to be so) if he is to gain respect and loyalty.
- Responsible – accept challenges and responsibilities
- Time conscious
- Industrious and energetic
- Work without supervision

### **Education and training**

- Skilled person – minimum qualifications could be a junior degree, project management as well as financial management to be able to monitor project funds and the report; Multi-skilled; articulate
- Experience in project management of at least 3 years
- Someone able to document project developments
- Good information management – to be able to manage hard and soft copies of project management
- Technical knowledge of the area /subject
- Good supervisory skills

### **Character**

- Calm and composed
- Democratic
- Aggressive enough to face challenges with zeal
- Passionate about one's work and goals
- Empathy and awareness of self and others

The study suggests that dictators, self centered, win-lose personalities do not have a place in HIV and AIDS projects. Project management is about facilitating people processes. It is about efforts to improve the status quo, an improvement in people through processes of

dialogue. To manage a project is to manage people and events driven by them. HIV and AIDS projects are defined around people and their patterns of interaction. The study also suggests that project management in HIV and AIDS control is synonymous with project leadership, for project managers are required to perform both transactional and transformational leadership functions.

The results of this study indicate that to successfully manage provision of HIV and AIDS services requires an upholding of certain principles and values; vision and maturity characterized by generosity of spirit. As Depree (1989), would put it, such maturity defines leadership and is “expressed in a sense of self-worth, a sense of belonging, a sense of expectancy, a sense of responsibility, a sense of accountability, and a sense of equality”. Depree (1989) further emphasizes that project managers owe their projects rationality, adding that “rationality gives reason and mutual understanding to programs and relationships. It gives visible order. Excellence and commitment and competence are available to us only under the rubric of rationality. A rational environment values trust and human dignity and provides the opportunity for personal development (and that of others) and self-fulfillment in the attainment of the organization’s goals”. However as Klein (1998) notes, “most humans make decisions [only] on the basis of past or perceived future patterns and not through rational choices between alternatives”.

While Trait centered leadership theorists emphasize that “leaders are born not made” the study suggests that good leadership and management qualities are also molded and nurtured by people’s environments, cultures, beliefs, norms, values and experiences. As the study reveals, successful HIV and AIDS project leaders and managers are often called to display a variety of different qualities ranging from “authoritarian (aggressive, control) to servant leadership (good listener, self awareness and of others, democratic, etc)” depending with the demands of the situation and context.

The findings of the study concur with perspective of contemporary organizational management training which recognizes a manager as a leader, and defines her/him as a person who is: “set apart by his training and abilities to guide the efforts of others; be

responsible for future leadership, and ...identify, develop, and nurture future-leaders (according to Depree, 1989); interpret to his team of staff the policies of the enterprise, and to plan, organize, direct, co-ordinate, and control their efforts so that the desired objectives of his section, department or enterprise are achieved in the most efficient and economical manner". A manager "must be aware of his responsibilities... and must be prepared to accept them fully. His policies...must always be honest, fair and unbiased. (The College of Professional Management, 1997)

As an art, leadership and management in HIV and AIDS control is much more difficult because it involves dealing not with inanimate, unfeeling objects, services or theories, but with unpredictable men and women – each of whom has different and complex character (The College of Professional Management, 1997).

But as management training would tell us, "a manager is a person, and as such will be fallible, subject to human error and failings, affected by various emotions, and conflicting claims and loyalty...he must thrive to identify personal shortcomings, and try to eradicate them if possible, or at any rate to suppress or control any faults that may cloud judgment" (The College of Professional Management 1997). It is those who have learnt effectively themselves, those who have experienced the full cycle of learning, who may manage effectively (Kolb, 1984). To know oneself better, one requires what April et al (2000) defines as meta skills "...skills needed to step back and look at ourselves in our broader contexts (family, work, community, the world, the universe) in order to raise our awareness, consciousness and understanding of who we are, why we are here, how we operate...our weaknesses... and how that affects others and our environment". This perspective is supported by Depree (1989) who propose that "we need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion".

#### **4.2.6 Conducive and supportive environment**

- i. Strong political support or top management will is required. HIV and AIDS activities in private sector organizations should be enshrined in organizational

policy and strategy frameworks to enable institutional support for the activities and the project team and provision of relevant legal frameworks. The study notes that *“Lack of government support often leads to conflict between project implementers and public authorities that may end up being politicized”*.

- ii. *“Bureaucratic red tape”* in organizations delays implementation.
- iii. Unclear communication structures may *“make projects collapse”*.

#### **4.2.7 Theoretical or paradigmatic foundation**

- i. According to the findings of this study, the majority of HIV and AIDS projects are not grounded on any specific theoretical framework or paradigm and therefore lack the foundation that guides critical thinking, values and worldviews of those who lead them. This confirms Koskela and Howell (2002)’s assertion that project management lacks the theoretical capacity to improve its practice. Consequently, project practitioners end up unconsciously leading projects through competing paradigmatic frameworks, compromising efforts to have reliable and valid HIV and AIDS project performance measurement systems.
- ii. In some cases, lack of theoretical grounding, coupled with poor planning, result in project designs with no clear focus and difficult to implement.
- iii. Inadequate theoretical and research grounding as one respondent noted *“is something that shows up – but very few people utilize this perspective”*. Theoretical perspectives are also relative – *“in behavior change, many western psychological theories have been legitimated as appropriate – i.e. choice based volitional models, but these don’t necessarily work well in our context”*.

The study suggests that at present, the management of social development projects such as HIV and AIDS appear to be overly guided by reductionist, logical project process techniques which are not grounded in a relevant theoretical framework. This is partly manifested in some of the following weaknesses of HIV and AIDS projects:

- i) Social development projects borrow methodologies from hard sciences' premise of "cause and effect of observable phenomena". Complex behavioral social development phenomena such as HIV and AIDS control can not be addressed solely on the basis of logical cause and effect relationships.
- ii) Presence of rigid donor funding rules and expectations which makes it difficult for projects to be responsive to changes in the social environment.
- iii) Too much concern with pursuing a predefined target, which is assumed to be in a static position. This makes it difficult for projects to be adaptive and limits the application of critical thinking on the part of most project teams and stakeholders. In reality, the environment often encounters regular turbulence and the target and the goal post is forced to shift sideways, and up down both like a pendulum and a ship in the deep seas. No wonder, most HIV and AIDS projects often miss their targets and infection rates continue to soar.
- iv) Fixed project completion timeframes which fail to accommodate implementation delays resulting from emergence. The set date of completion defines the when the project ends even in cases when activities have not been completed.
- v) Absence of contingency measures to accommodate extra resources for emergent properties
- vi) Absence of project exit plans that address sustainability concerns and fail to optimize project learning
- vii) Poor conceptualization, understanding and use of monitoring and evaluation for HIV and AIDS project quality management purposes. Instead, monitoring and evaluations are used as events for "fault finding".
- viii) Less emphasis on project leadership and management training for social development.
- ix) Perception of social development project leadership and management as a job rather than a profession, hence little accommodation for innovation to the practice.

Building social development projects on systemic thinking and methodologies could address some of the above constraints and improve the performance social development projects.

#### **4.2.8 Monitoring and evaluation frameworks.**

- i. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be designed and implemented. The lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework results in poor tracking of project performance. Regular /periodic reviews/ performance appraisal, through meetings and reports should be conducted to highlight gaps, weaknesses, strength and areas that may be effective and require rolling out or emphasizing. In that way corrective measures are taken promptly. Reporting on achievements and constraints must be timely because, *“When projects are not reported periodically, problems are not detected early enough to provide timely remedies”*. Targets should be realistic on the basis of rigorous analysis. Much of the Project manager’s function should be on monitoring and evaluation...diagnosis of project processes and progress.
- ii. In some cases, project designs are characterized by in appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies. Indicators/ measures of success may be unclear or difficult to measure.
- iii. Formative research, baseline studies, situation assessments and analysis are required to inform project designs and be the basis for measuring progress.
- iv. Documentation of lessons and experiences

#### **4.2.9 Motivation of project teams**

- i. Project teams must be fairly remunerated
- ii. Trust must be unquestionable between team members
- iii. The project team should associate themselves and take pride in success. Celebrating success at every stage is motivating.

#### **4.2.10 Stakeholder participation**

- i. Involvement/interest; participation of target group/ stakeholders in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- ii. Communities must be well mobilized to support the project; trust; common understanding/ agenda by all stakeholders.
- iii. Client acceptance of project. Projects that are designed without adequate consultation of stakeholders often result in “denial of the problem by those targeted by the project”. It is ironical that a project should in the first instance put so much effort to convince the communities that it seeks to improve, that they have a problem. This is characteristic of “expert development processes” in which the experts know what is good for the communities. The community is the “victim” and the expert is the “savior” (Nchabeleng, 2000).

#### **4.2.11 Multisectoral response**

- i. Project designs must be systemic and recognize the multidisciplinary nature of HIV and AIDS. In the words of one respondent, “HIV and AIDS would be better controlled if it was mainstreamed or programmed in all development spheres rather than undertaken in piece-meals which results in lack of sustainability”. Most projects tend to be inward looking and thus failing to take advantage of the comparative strengths of other initiatives in the areas in which they are implemented. In some cases, there is “*competition and rivalry between organizations implementing related activities in the same areas*”. Some organizations create turfs around certain interventions and safeguard them as their competitive edge to attract funding and ensure survival of the organization. In some cases, implementing organizations will “*have competing agenda*”.

Nevertheless, most donor funded organizations do not acknowledge failure of projects for fear of losing donor funding and as one respondent put it “*No one I know has admitted to failing!*” and in cases where failure is pointed out, “*the project driver turns around and says the original intent was just to raise awareness, nothing more fancy or profound*”.

Participants noted that the extent to which the above determinants are managed can predetermine whether a project will succeed or fail from the very beginning. During project design, indicators for success should be determined, outputs clarified as well as

levels of inputs required determined. More importantly, project risks including mitigation measures should be anticipated and planned for using such tools as SWOT analysis to anticipate risk. But as one respondent noted, *“if that analysis is not A grade stuff, and fails to consider very critical variables and success factors, it may wrongly predict success”*. If projects are unclear from the onset, the people involved may be demotivated to push progress. The foundation of successful projects is based on sound strategic direction, management, well aligned human and motivated personnel and material resources rather than an ad hoc and haphazard approach... If you have done a proper assessment before you start, have a thorough planning exercise, budget carefully and make your work plan and outputs realistic, you have a good chance of succeeding. But the question remains, realistic to whose standards? How much effort is enough? How much realism would not be judged as setting easy targets? There is so much work to be done in social development management practice to address some of these difficult questions.

One can be sure of project failure if there is no project document; insufficient resources; lack of personnel; poor knowledge on project management and no experiences. Project practitioners should develop common guidelines that define and help to measure performance standards. Respondents noted that *“Poor, rushed, none participatory, non evidence based –situation –problem based, poorly resourced, poor risk analysis based designs are doomed to fail”*.

If the project proposal is clear, it can provide useful information/ signals to determine success or failure as one respondent put it, *“e.g. implementation being planned to take place during for instance a rainy season when roads are inaccessible or when communities are busy farming Or if they are no adequately trained personnel to drive the project”*.

However, some organizations prepare excellent proposals and plans but lacking good project managers to drive the projects, and as one respondent said, *“some individuals are good writers and can develop excellent proposals, but may necessarily not be good*

*managers. However, this might only be visible long after the project has been implemented and not at the onset as such*". Similarly, a well designed project with excellent team *"may face unforeseen problems during course of delivery such as death, acts of nature, political turmoil, economic collapse, and change of personnel and project leadership, which may change the course for the bad"*.

Lastly, whether foreseen or not, there is an extent to which some factors are within or beyond the control of project managers. In the words of one respondent, *"success can be predetermined to the extent that execution actually follows a predetermined course where deviation from said course is within control of the project manager, and the severity of the impact of such deviation is known and/ or minimal"*.

#### **4.3 Project Management as a Development Methodology**

Respondents unanimously concurred that:

Projects, big or small are a critical way of organizing programmes including those involved in service delivery because they enable a systematic way of addressing problems as one respondent echoed, *"There are quite a lot of ways to control HIV and AIDS epidemic, but all should emanate from a project so that a plan is developed to guide all kinds of implementation"*. Projects are useful in assisting to address a specific intervention within a programme; they help bring in new lessons on how to approach problems. HIV and AIDS responses are so broad and the need for projects is useful in employing short term targeted activities such as behavior change campaigns. Projects enable organizations to address key problems fueling the epidemic, to focus their strategies to address specific problems. They enable organizations to mobilize resources and to measure progress. Projects are useful when well planned to respond to the identified needs of the clients; resources used as planned and reports made timeously. They can be bad if detached from existing services; if resources are not used for their primary aim, etc. *"It doesn't matter whether you are looking to educate, distribute prophylactics, identify a vaccine, or to encourage people not to have sex – you got to approach it as a project"*. Projects are useful for as long as they fit in a broader strategy

of the organization /government (national/local, etc) so as not implement ad hoc HIV projects. It is important to have projects contributing to government policy. For this to occur, projects should be designed to contribute to the implementation of national Government strategic plans. The policy environment must be conducive to project development and implementation.

As one respondent noted, *“Social change is a big animal”*. It can not be achieved by one or two year projects *“because the challenge is too big... One hopes that as more 3-year small projects come into life, and coordinate their effort... and learn from each other... and complement rather than compete... the result will be positive in the medium to long term”*. The HIV and AIDS pandemic pose challenges to classic project management practice as noted by some respondents who remarked that *“There are two sides to viewing projects: (i) you cant leap over a gulf in two or three steps on one hand and (ii) and the only way to eat a whole elephant is to take small bite size chunks, one at a time!... look at the example of a guy tossing starfish which had been beached by the tide back into the see. Since there is millions of the critters lying dying on the beach, an observer is quick to point out the futility of this exercise/... What difference does it make”*? Huge problems such as HIV and AIDS require patience, perseverance, targeted and effective efforts to realize impact in the long run.

Projects are very useful *“... but must be clearly defined theoretically and programmatically to meet social challenges”*. They must not be rigid, but evolving, flexible, adaptive. *“Project practitioners must be facilitators than experts”*. The idea of time bound in projects is good but must be seen from the perspective of phased timeframes with provision for continuity *“for as long as the problem exists”*. Where there is no flexibility, the idea of time brings in problems of rushing things through and challenging sustainability.

To quote one respondent, *“A project is very helpful since it identifies the most critical point and issues that would guide the implementation of it. Once a project starts, it should not just end there. There is need for continuity of the activities so that it then*

*becomes a program*". This implies that projects should graduate within a programme from one level to another through experiential learning and run sequentially for as long as the problem exists.

Projects are currently the most ideal way of mobilizing donor funds. HIV funding heavily depends on donor funding. Donors only sponsor a project for a specified period. However, problems arise when the short term nature of project funding become a key determinant of the duration of an intervention rather than the existence of the problem. HIV and AIDS workplace interventions such as counseling and treatment are an example where projectising the intervention and time framing it along availability of funding may threaten continuity of service. Because the necessity of the service is life long, such interventions should graduate from a project to a programme such that it becomes a routine priority of the organization as one respondent noted.

With the end unforeseen and its severity increasing by the day, the HIV and AIDS epidemic is a challenge to current project management practice in which projects are largely designed as short term, in most cases without follow-up projects to build on preceding efforts. In a region such as SADC, which is currently reeling in poverty, using the classic definition of project to address service delivery problems such as treatment, care and support may in itself be a major setback as sustainability of implemented activities is always a challenge.

An improved and adaptive approach to managing projects is required. Such an approach should be hinged on community management of their own destiny in which funding is directed to a programme and communities channel it to areas where there is greatest need rather than the current practice in which funding is provided and managed to address a specific need and may not be diverted to a more critical emerging need.

New metaphors and concepts which promote such practice should be developed such as "basket funding...joint financing arrangements" (SADC HIV and AIDS Unit, 2005) in which donors contribute funds to a common "basket" and harmonize their conditions

funding, to address a broader problem or programme without stringent conditions on the specificity of the need (project) to be addressed, leaving the community or beneficiaries to decide and from time to time review on priorities to be addressed immediately and comprehensively. These proposals are supported by respondents who, while acknowledging the value of projects, argued that “*projects are discrete activities*” and should be built in programmes or “*broad areas of work*” [which are] “*are sustained focal areas*”. To quote one project practitioner, “...*ideally we would prefer to be funded for our programme areas so that we can determine what projects are logical and appropriate. Instead, we end up fitting projects under programme headings on an ad hoc basis*”. According to the study, “*the programme approach is more logical, but it requires more of a core funding orientation from donors [and yet] the major shift has actually been in the opposite direction – donors want to see particular projects*”.

The magnitude and severity of the problem, complexity of the situation (mess), duration of the problem, capacity required and scale of response, are some of the critical issues to consider when designing HIV and AIDS projects. The problem with current HIV and AIDS projects is that they follow a prototype (formula like) design framework that assumes “one size fits all” in terms of methodology, framework and paradigmatic foundation characteristic of hard sciences which are largely irrelevant to social messes such as HIV and AIDS. “*A one year project to change behavior may be as bad as no effort at all because it creates aspirations on communities that it does not fulfill during its ‘lifespan’*”. Projects should be designed to accommodate a cumulative process of interventions which build on each other to ensure continuity of effort in addressing social development rather than the current practice in which projects exist as entities by and for themselves.

In addition, coordination of the various players (donors, implementing organizations and Government institutions, communities, etc) should be strengthened to ensure harmony, comprehensive, complimentary and systemic interventions at any level of service delivery – individual, family, community, national, etc). A comprehensive package of services should be provided through facilitating partnerships and collaboration between various players working on HIV and AIDS control with communities.

To **improve on project management**, capacity development and training in areas such as articulation of relevance of theory to development, monitoring and evaluation, etc should be rolled out extensively. Staff must be better skilled by improving supervision, mentoring and training. Project managers should be trained in project management principles and practice and as one respondent said, *“hopefully ingraining in them the principle that you can’t improve that which you can’t measure”*. In addition, governments must provide more funds for the support of HIV projects and promote and facilitate partnerships and networking to overcome duplication of efforts. The private sector should fulfill its social roles and responsibilities.

HIV and AIDS control efforts should be built into the socio- cultural context or system in which an individual is targeted at birth as part of their socialization process – *“built into people’s way of life –culture designed – culture fit”* rather than be seen as an external effort to socio-cultural context. Interventions should be built on community practices and norms that promote HIV and AIDS control. These can be established through anthropological analysis of the communities. Project efforts should be driven by communities and *“communities should be capacitated to be able to implement and manage interventions”*.

Project management should be grounded in new thinking – emphasizing holistic designs, adaptive, evolving, spiral cycle that builds on other spiral cycles – designed as a learning process. Project designs must adjust to the web of complexity rather than resign in “forced simplicity” in which they are restrained by desire for orderliness and predictability. The interrelationships that define life are complex and therefore project designs should match this complexity in order to successfully address social challenges.

#### **4.4 Challenges of “sustainability assumptions” for HIV and AIDS Projects**

The project life cycle is guided by the premise of a “closure” and handover. From the arguments emanating from this study, it would appear that, more often with HIV and AIDS projects this “closure” is done with no provision for transference of learning, knowledge and skills to those whom the project is handed over. Often, another project, with a different design and focus emerges and is built on different assumptions divorced from the effects of the previous project. The result is that the community’s pattern of life and values are subjected to changes along the various projects that come and go. The community loses its inherent, natural systems to cope, relying on externally imposed and often rushed, not clearly facilitated and understood value systems brought in by different projects. This perpetuates dependency and vulnerability. Communities begin to look more at projects as saviors (Nchabeleng, 2000) than processes that are meant to build and strengthen on their own values.

The implicit assumption in the majority of external or donor funding to HIV and AIDS projects is that the communities being supported should, at the end of the funding period, be able to take over responsibility over project activities. For HIV and AIDS programmes, this assumption is often made in disregard of the socio-economic context in which the projects are implemented. HIV and AIDS destroy economies and the capacity of households and communities to fend for themselves by killing the bread winners. Given that most project designs are imposed on communities rather than generated by or with communities, these projects are not built on the day to day social coping systems of communities. It is ironic to think of communities being able to sustain a myriad of short term project initiatives that are introduced to them without taking cognizance of their willingness and capacity to embrace those initiatives into their socio-cultural, economic and political lives.

In the SADC region, poverty remains the greatest challenge of sustaining HIV and AIDS and many other social development interventions. The question for project practitioners and donors is: to what extent should Governments and local communities be expected to

take over funding and sustenance of project initiatives? What are the financial and resource implications of adding on or building activities within their existing plans? What is sustainability if sustenance of project activities would still require external funding? What is sustainability for example in **an AIDS treatment project** if a Government can not sustain the salaries and retain the very nurses that have drained it's limited resources through training for example? It would appear that the word sustainability as currently defined in social development is misleading. It does not take cognizance of the fact that social development is enmeshed in a bigger mess called globalization. In this scenario, success at the community level depends on the nature and patterns of socio-economic and political relationships at the **global level**, which are so dynamic and complex. This situation further calls for a systemic approach to social development projects such as HIV and AIDS, which takes cognizant of all the community, national, regional, continental and global interrelationships that contribute to social development challenges.

In a way, this suggests that success and sustainability of local projects can only be achieved and sustained if a state of **global development equilibrium** has been achieved. As long as there are the rich and poor, weak and powerful – e.g. the Western countries attracting human resources from poor countries, it would be difficult to achieve sustainability of social development efforts. The poor countries continue to use their scarce resources to train professionals who end up serving in rich countries, exacerbating poverty. In a token attempt to address the cycle of poverty richer countries pledge financial support to the poor countries, but when the funds are released, there is little capacity remaining in the country to utilize it for the purposes of addressing increasing problems. The funding is withdrawn on the basis of “no capacity to use it and deliver services”. Consequently, a cycle of poverty and dependency is perpetuated. This is what is defined by the current global development paradigm. The law of the jungle “survival of the fittest” prevails.

To adequately address HIV and AIDS and the numerous social development challenges resulting from it and caused by it, a new global development paradigm is required, which is built and takes cognizance of the inherent dignity of human beings – the common

good, built on global collective consensus and learning from lessons of current failure and successes of HIV and AIDS projects and other social development initiatives. Until this happens or significant progress is made towards it, any talk about sustainability of HIV and AIDS projects under the current crisis in most of Southern Africa will remain cosmetic and cheap social development politicking. Systemic HIV and AIDS and other social development project designs are required to drive development efforts within the realities of such complexity.

The challenges of sustainability are exacerbated by the reality that most HIV and AIDS projects are piecemeal, uncoordinated, interventions tailor made to specific donor requirements, funding cycles and timeframes.

Like any new interaction that is introduced or facilitated within a system, these numerous projects have their own way of influencing existing value systems of the community systems- in most cases unfortunately calling for radical changes to these values overnight, without providing adequately for the effects of such overhaul. But then with numerous organizations competing to implement HIV and AIDS projects in same communities, how many times and from how many angles do we have the aspirations of communities continuously changed but unfulfilled and their value systems challenged and diluted over short periods of time? This occurrence has serious implications on the capacity of the community to draw on its own experiential learning and consciously reflect on its inherent capacities to self organize. The more aspirations communities are made to develop (of course depending on how many uncoordinated, disconnected, reductionist projects and subprojects are introduced into the community) the further they move away from their own familiar value systems on which they have grown to rely through out their history and which define their coping mechanisms. Ironically as development practitioners, we relentlessly promote this continuous value change to communities through our ever changing development methodologies and concepts that are grounded in reductionist, survival of the fittest mentality, with no theoretical or paradigmatic foundation as the centre of gravity or anchorage to hold us or fall back on or refer to in cases where there is overwhelming chaos as is the case with HIV and AIDS.

Project managers have become knowledge hubs and increasingly rewarded on our ability to introduce and test our ever evolving knowledge among the unsuspecting communities at speeds that are alien to them.

The shortcomings of the current social development processes are exemplified by the premise of projects “having discrete starts and ends of their own”, divorced from the challenges of the broader system in which they seek to make a contribution. The beginning and end of HIV and AIDS projects are abstract because the projects do not start in a vacuum; they evolve from previous experiences and interventions by the targeted community. Neither should they be made to end in the metaphorical sense of a “closure” –like shutting the door, because “the problem continues”. Instead, they should be designed on an intention to build on community experiential learning and collective consensus, in which self reflection enables emergence to be recognized as it emerge and to be built into community actions and fed into future experiences and actions. As one respondent noted, “the problem is when we design projects as reductionist, self contained and self-serving entities divorced from the overall contribution to the ultimate well-being of the people”. A project should be defined and viewed as a living system - when one aspect of the system is exhausted, you pass on the challenge to the next aspect... Like the universe and life, there is no clear beginning and ending “for as long as the problem exists”.

Recognizing the importance of a planned end of project process and the neglect that this stage of the project has tended to be accorded in project design, the researcher is proposing that every social development /HIV and AIDS project should articulate an exit strategy, and build within this strategy, implementation of a clear sustainability plan. Projects must serve as platforms of future development efforts, as one development specialist noted, “*Projects must meet a felt need of the community and improve performance, not be an end for themselves. Projects that serve as an end in themselves create ‘victims’ of social development efforts and a ‘dependency triangle’*”. Nchabeleng (2000).

#### **4.5 Collective consensus for the common good**

A great deal of HIV and AIDS project management is concerned with managing relationships, interactions and patterns of behavior of the agents of the social system. It is concerned with facilitating dialogue and influencing the patterns of interaction and relationships in order to produce meaningful or desired change. Meaningful change in this case should be defined by dialogue driven collective understanding of the system based on experiential learning resulting from previous and current interaction and, nature and patterns of relationships of its agents. In a bid to safeguard its identity and survival, the system “self organizes” in response to both its internal and external environment, guided by its zeal to ensure the perpetuation and well being of its individual components - the common good.

Every system is defined by the patterns of behavior of its components. HIV and AIDS project performance is defined by both the interaction of its internal environment – the project team, the organization as well as its external environment – the beneficiaries and stakeholders including donors. There are so many issues –relationships and patterns of interaction that define project performance, and as established through the definitions of both project and performance in this study, “measurement is established on the basis of feedback from regular monitoring and evaluation of effort or interaction of various agents directly or indirectly connected to the delivery of the project”. Dialogue, networking, collaboration and building collective between agents internal and external, based on reflective learning, is at the core of the success of any HIV and AIDS system or project.

Yet HIV and AIDS project indicators are very linear and mechanistic, often solely emphasizing on the output – or the result of the project, without adequately focusing on the processes, quality of service delivery, institutional arrangements and capacities that drive the programmes or projects and interconnectedness and interactions that produce these outputs. To effectively determine and measure performance, projects should therefore build within them indicators to measure relationships of stakeholders in order to

better understand the dynamics and patterns of behavior of the system, and their impact on achieving set targets.

Project management practice as a system has its own patterns of interaction, relationships and behavior which determines the definition of what is success or failure of a project. The community of project practitioners working on HIV and AIDS should reconcile their differences and address the “chaos” embedded in project implementation processes and definitions through collective consensus on what constitute good practice in project management; what constitute success or failure. This is possible as according to Covey (1997) “humans acting consciously or unconsciously are capable of a collective imposition of order in their interactions that enables cause to be separated from effect”. This harmony is required at any level of project implementation to safeguard the relevance of project management as a practice and social development methodology. HIV and AIDS project leaders and managers should be guided and make decisions, grounded on the values, beliefs and principles of the systems that give them the legitimacy to lead. They should have broader understanding of negative and positive, intended or unintended effects of our actions, guided by values that promote collective consensus and sustaining the common good -where HIV and AIDS will no longer be a threat to human kind.

We live within systems in which our individual behavior is being influenced by being in the system interacting with those whom we co-exist. As a result “individual biases in judgment become especially problematic in complex systems, because one mistake can trigger a series of other breakdowns in the system” Roberto (2002). As individual project managers, our success is defined by the social systems we live in. Within this context, it is important to direct projects within the realms of a commonly defined social framework which provides the basis for common understanding, reconciling the numerous individual differences, perspectives and worldviews in order to harmonize human interaction and approaches for solving the complex HIV and AIDS epidemic.

The findings of the study suggests that successful HIV and AIDS project leadership and management should be built on recognition of the interdependency, collaboration, coordination and partnerships between different organizations, institutions and individuals. According to Covey (1997), while it may expose us to greater pain, such “interdependence opens worlds of possibilities for deep meaningful associations, greater productivity, service, contribution and growth”.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of the study - to define the key determinants of performance of HIV and AIDS project has been achieved, but is certainly not conclusive. The study identified several determinants of performance among which are: availability of adequate resources; quality of planning; creativity of project teams; timeliness in implementation; quality of leadership and management; the qualities of the project leader /manager; the social, political, economic environment in which the project is implemented; theoretical /paradigmatic relevance of project designs and implementation methodologies; the quality of monitoring and evaluation; motivation of project teams and beneficiaries; stakeholder participation; and multisectorality of project efforts. The study highlights the multitude and diversity of skills and personalities expected of an HIV and AIDS project practitioner, challenging governments and civil society organizations and academics to embark on extensive training programmes and ensure that more project practitioners get closer to this “ideal project manager”.

The study confirms the definition of a project as defined in most available literature, bringing in the flair and challenges of HIV and AIDS. In addition it highlights the relevance of project management as a development methodology, suggesting that projects, whether small or large, are undoubtedly one of the most practical ways to organize and implement programmes addressing social development challenges such as HIV and AIDS. The HIV and AIDS epidemic is so complex and broad. The use of projects enable organizations to fulfill big programmes, through designing and implementing a series of planned short term, and often unique specific strategies and interventions that are, time and resource bound, manageable and targeted to address key problems fueling the epidemic such as high risk sexual behavior. With funding for HIV and AIDS control heavily dependant on donor support, projects are currently the most ideal way of mobilizing, utilizing and accounting for resources as well as monitoring and establishing progress in performance of initiatives. They can assist in testing of effective approaches and allowing experiential learning on how to better address messy situations such as HIV and AIDS. However donor funding should not dictate priorities and

methodologies for HIV and AIDS control. In addition, donors should harmonize funding mechanisms and conditions to enable communities to use the funding comprehensively and systemically to develop long term programmes with series of cumulative, complementary projects to address competing HIV and AIDS priorities in sustainable ways.

Based on experiences with shortcomings of most current HIV and AIDS projects, the study proposes that to be successful, HIV and AIDS projects must be designed, planned and implemented within a clearly defined theoretical and paradigmatic framework that provides opportunities for common approaches that take cognizant of diversity and interconnectedness of social development challenges. Project designs must not be cast in concrete, but must be evolving, flexible and adaptive to the ever emerging contexts and patterns of social relationships that define human life in any context. In that respect projects should be designed to facilitate the realization of context specific social development agenda as identified by the local communities, rather than resorting to prototype, blue print, expert oriented formulae on community social development efforts and thereby risking being “an end for themselves”. They should be designed to respond to the identified needs of the clients taking cognizance of contextual dynamics, efforts and historical and inherent patterns of community mechanisms and value systems for coping with adversities and emergence.

For complex, long term endemic problems such as HIV and AIDS, the idea of time bound delivery as definitive of projects is appreciated, but must be seen from the perspective of phased timeframes which provide for long term continuity of interventions “for as long as the problem exists”. A problem such as HIV and AIDS “is a big animal”. It can not be achieved by one or two year projects with no regard and connectivity to the magnitude and duration of the problem because the challenge is too big. “One hopes that as more 3-year small projects come into life, and coordinate their efforts, and learn from each other, and complement rather than compete – the result will be positive in the medium to long term”. Where there is no flexibility, the idea of time bound may bring in problems of “rushing things through” with no regard to linking the interventions to the

long term trends, levels and patterns of the epidemic to ensure sustainability and provide adequate time for reflection and learning within the targeted communities.

An attempt has been made to define “performance” in light of HIV and AIDS projects. The study suggests that monitoring and evaluation is a key methodology as well as tool for measuring progress or success and failure of HIV and AIDS projects. The study highlights the low levels of understanding and application of monitoring and evaluation and recommends that more work be done to enhance the systemic understanding and practical application of monitoring and evaluation in HIV and AIDS control programmes, not only as a planned event as currently prevails, but internalize it at individual and institutional levels as a behavioral practice of project practitioners. A systemic, comprehensive or holistic monitoring and evaluation (monitoring and evaluation) framework is an essential component of measuring and establishing the levels and patterns of performance of any project initiative. Performance measurement is a process that should be prepared and commence from the onset of project conceptualization and through out the duration of the project.

The study has been deliberately broad to serve a “formative” function in project management practice for social development. It draws its conclusions from a qualitative enquiry on the perception and experiences of fifteen project practitioners averaging Masters Degree level of academic achievement and more than one hundred and fifty years of experience between them earned through their interaction with more than fifty academic institutions, development organizations, private sector and government institutions in the SADC region. The conclusions are also drawn from referencing research, progress and evaluation reports; strategic and operational documents and observations during meetings and workshops of more than 15 national, regional and international development organizations and Government programmes. The researcher notes that the conclusion neglects the opinions and perceptions of ordinary people who could be beneficiaries of projects or observers of project efforts. This could be addressed in future studies of a similar nature.

More work is required in specific areas to provide further clarity and in depth analysis on specific factors that determine the performance of HIV and AIDS projects. In particular, the researcher challenges project practitioners and academia to come up with a theoretical framework and practical methodological tools that can guide the design and implementation of realistically sustainable social development projects, especially the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS.

An attempt to link project management to systems thinking and the learning cycle has led the researcher to conclude that project management is synonymous with systems management. Learning is an integral part of any successful project management practice. Every stage of the project cycle deserves as much attention as the other, and in particular, the end of a project should be characterized by a practical exit strategy with a clear sustainability plan built into the project handover process. In this way, the project cycle phenomena is qualified as project experiences are built into future community efforts and not lost with the completion of the project. Every project therefore becomes not only an effort to change the status quo, but also a form of baseline or research practice that informs future and other ongoing efforts. The researcher argues that the idea of “life” in the “project life cycle” is not justifiable in HIV and AIDS projects as it denotes life and death, opening and closure, beginning and end of development efforts. The researcher argues that every project is built on ongoing and existing efforts of communities and builds into future efforts, thereby discrediting the perception of “life and death”.

There is consistency in the definition of project and project management as perceived by project practitioners to the theoretical definitions. Within these definitions and descriptions is embedded systems characteristics of purposeful assembly of organized effort, skills and materials; boundaries; inclusiveness; involvement of various stakeholders with different perspectives and worldviews, bringing innovative ideas and creativity to create a unique product; setting up of an organized community of individuals and groups of people towards a common agenda; among other systems concepts. To address the complex and systemic problems of HIV and AIDS, the researcher recommends that project practitioners explore the wide use of systems thinking both as

meta-paradigm and methodology for driving complex social development efforts such as HIV and AIDS. In the same vein the terminology and language used in project management should be revisited to reflect holistic approach to addressing complex social phenomena. For example, the researcher proposes the use of “intention” to substitute “objective” of an effort because, the concept of objective is rather rooted in mechanistic thinking which would in this case, tends to limit perception of performance of HIV and AIDS efforts to objects easily recognizable within the “five senses” of our making sense of reality. In social development, significant performance can be realized in not so apparent psycho-social constructs such as values, self esteem, collective consensus, team work, consciousness etcetera. In addition, the adoption of the definition of a project as part of a programme or “bigger picture” should compel project practitioners to think and act beyond the realms of their perceived boundaries and pursue a deeper understanding of the intricacies of human interrelationships that fuel complex problems such as HIV and AIDS rather than setting themselves and pursuing easily achievable and fixed “targets”. The forces that fuel HIV and AIDS are indeed not static but in constant change. They are as unpredictable as human behavior. Therefore the metaphor of setting and “shooting” at static and easy “targets” will not address the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

To manage social systems effectively, one requires an understanding of systems and the skills that come with the management of systems. From the perspective of this study, the project practitioner requires a myriad of skills and personality, most of which are related to managing and understanding patterns of social relationships and interaction of systems and subsystems. Project practitioners require training to be able to manage projects effectively. They require knowledge and understanding of the behavior of systems. They need skills on systems management. Systems thinking provide the necessary theoretical concepts, methodologies, tools and techniques required by project practitioners to better manage projects as systems.

The researcher introduces the concept of “conscious experiencing of existence” borrowing from the learning cycle and experiential learning, to emphasize on the need for individual project practitioners or project teams to reflect on the self and take

responsibility over their ideas and actions, recognizing that being alive is akin to being in a constant state of experiential learning. Such consciousness must be built into their day to day, moment by moment decision making, thought processes and action, recognizing that the well being and sustenance of human kind are rooted in the common values and principles of win-win not win-lose; in the realization of the interdependency of human interaction and survival – in striving to achieve the common good. Conscious experiencing of existence suggest that project practitioners should at any point during the course of a project, reflect on sustainability and impact (positive or negative) of their efforts and the extent to which intervention efforts can be continued into the future. They should reflect on the project as a system; reflecting on previous and future stages. The researcher acknowledges that because of the formative nature of the study, this concept has not been well developed but only introduced, and could be the focus of further studies on his part or other researchers.

Project cycles must be built on cumulative experiential learning and implemented through a series of interrelated and adaptive projects “for as long as the problem exists”. Time and resource sources and limitations should not be the dominant determinants of sustaining successful project efforts. New project resources should be generated to build, follow-up and improve on successful project cycles. The study also suggests that effective and sustainable HIV and AIDS projects should be designed, implemented and monitored and evaluated through processes grounded in stakeholder participation, dialogue and collective consensus to build ownership and sustainability of project efforts on communities.

One of the key issues coming out of this study is that **networking, coordination and partnerships** are critical to any community HIV and AIDS control efforts because the problem is systemic. New funding or time framed project efforts should build on effective previous or ongoing project efforts in ways that communities can identify and internalize and build on as part of their way of life. HIV and AIDS control efforts such as behavior change communication could work better if they were built into the patterns of community cultures and socialization processes. What this denotes therefore is that any

HIV and AIDS control effort or project – in which the end of the problem can not be foreseen, should be built within programmes. The duration or to use the classic “life” of the programme should be for “as long as the problem remain.”

The metaphors used in the language of project management are largely mechanistic. These metaphors lead us to see and understand and perceive issues in mechanistic ways. They exert influence on what we think and do, the language we use (Morgan, 1986). The development of new metaphors that recognize the complexity of HIV and AIDS as a systemic issue will go a long in transforming project management practice.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the work done in this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations for project management:

### **Framework for project delivery**

- a) Systems thinking should be embraced as the global paradigm guiding social development frameworks. The community of project practitioners, researchers, academics and national governments should collectively develop a theoretical – paradigmatic framework to guide HIV and AIDS control programmes and projects. The researcher recommends that systems thinking be embraced as the paradigm and methodology for HIV and AIDS control efforts. Project designs should take into account, the systemic nature of HIV and AIDS, the various issues, interrelationships, constituencies and stakeholders that play a role in both exacerbating the epidemic and controlling it.
- b) Project practitioners and organizations should develop flexible and adaptive project designs and plans to accommodate changing environment and emerging challenges at any stage during the course of the project. Plans and designs must be based on local realities and capacities.
- c) Project designs, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes should be built on principles that respect human values and dignity. The researcher has suggested in this study, some of the principles that should be adopted in monitoring and evaluation of HIV and AIDS projects. For example, projects should not create aspirations among local communities that they can not fulfill. They should not “make people live in their dreams but live their dreams”.
- d) Social development projects should be contextually designed to address local priorities. Project designs should be built on local values and prevailing community social processes, experiences and coping mechanisms. Anthropological research should be conducted to inform project design to identify these value systems and practices. Project design frameworks must be built on methodologies that seek to reflect and establish current practices, their strengths,

weaknesses and opportunities. Value systems must not be superimposed on communities as this denotes some form of development imperialism. Project designs must be built on evidence and experiential learning, a quest for improving on existing situations and an understanding of causal linkages. The process of establishing such evidence must be facilitated and driven by systemic, participatory, emancipatory, dialogic and constructivist processes built on an understanding that communities themselves know what is best for them. No imposition of models developed under different circumstances and value systems elsewhere. Such models can only be a guide, acceptable to the communities in which they are introduced.

- e) Project practitioners should facilitate participatory establishment of realistic exit and sustainability plans in any project design framework that address human rights and the dignity of individuals.

#### **Policy and funding mechanisms**

- f) Donor funding cycles, conditions of funding and targeting of support should be reviewed and harmonized at regional, national and community levels to minimize duplication of efforts, competition among implementing organizations, transactional costs among project implementers, ensure complementarity in support and implementation of activities.
- g) Organizations implementing projects and donors should negotiate and agree on long term resources support to projects to provide human-technical, material – equipment and financial support that will enable sustenance, roll out or reinforcement of interventions that are proven effective beyond one project.
- h) Donors should refrain from setting their own priorities as conditions for funding local HIV and AIDS activities. Instead, donors should work with local communities to establish context specific priorities before making decisions on what to fund and not.

- i) National governments, local communities, private sector and civil society organizations should jointly mobilize resources to sustain community HIV and AIDS activities.
- j) Regional organizations such as SADC should facilitate development of a regional policy framework that will guide member States to adopt and enforce the use of systemic social development methodologies and practices
- k) At national level, policies or legislation should be developed to compel all stakeholders to provide monitoring and evaluation information consistently to national AIDS authorities to improve on coordination of overall performance of HIV and AIDS programmes

#### **Project Quality, Research and Capacity Development**

- l) Academic and practical training on project management should be scaled up at all levels of project management practice to produce a critical mass of competent project practitioners that match the magnitude of social development challenges. Project management guidelines are required to guide HIV and AIDS practitioners and harmonize perceptions of project practice, processes and performance. Given the importance of projects as a development methodology and the risks associated with poor project management to social value systems, project practitioners and organizations that drive projects, should be certified in project management in order to practice.
- m) Project practitioners in the SADC region should review, develop and harmonize systemic performance measurement or monitoring and evaluation frameworks to guide social development practice. Project practitioners should consider spending more of their time on monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part or day to day behavioral practice of all project management and leadership functions at any level, not simply relegated as an event between lengthy periods of project implementation to enable timely identification and addressing of emergence at any point and level of project implementation.

- n) More research and professional documentation is required to contribute and improve on project management practice. Emphasis should be placed on using research to inform project design and strengthening the role of communities in this process. Anthropological research covering historical patterns of community coping mechanisms and present practices and issues are recommended to ensure that projects are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated building on context specific community experiences, values, norms and practices.

### **Partnerships and Networking**

- o) Organizations working on HIV and AIDS control should establish or strengthen existing regional, national and community partnerships and networks and collaborate their efforts within the broader HIV and AIDS response system.
- p) International and regional organizations such as the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), expert NGO and private sector organizations and Governments should work together to design and implement frameworks that will guide implementation, monitoring and evaluation of formation and sustenance of partnerships, networks and collaboration and synergy efforts.

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## **Annex 1: Proposal for a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

The research proposes that evaluations be guided by the following framework, which can be adapted and improved on:

**Background and introduction:** providing a background of the project and introducing the evaluation. Provide an outline of the problem addressed by the project and the context in which the project is being implemented. Various stakeholders involved in the project must be identified within the public sector, civil society and private sector. Their roles and responsibilities in the execution of the evaluation and its subsequent recommendations should be established prior to the evaluation.

### **Defining Evaluation**

Evaluation is a process of generating information for purposes of informing the development and measure performance and impact of a program during, and at the end of its implementation. It is either formative or summative. Formative evaluation informs program personnel on decision making, problem solving, strategic planning and improving programs. Summative evaluation is conducted at the end of the program to provide stakeholders with judgments about the program's worth or merit. It informs decision concerning program continuation, termination, expansion, adoption, etc. (Worthen and Sanders (1987).

Evaluations establish performance indices as the reliability, efficiency, meaningfulness, fairness and effectiveness of a program. It aids reflection on actions taken and in this way opens up opportunities for new issues and dilemmas to be considered. It also asks whether chosen improvement strategies are still valued. Evaluation plays is important to keeping stakeholders informed about consequences of programs and helps them to learn their way into the future. It facilitates learning.

## **Scope of the Evaluation**

The scope of the evaluation must be defined as follows:

**Assumption:** The assumptions underlying the evaluation must be outlined and reconciled between the client commissioning the evaluation and the evaluators.

**Purpose and specific objectives:** The purpose and specific objectives of the evaluation framework should be defined

**Stakeholders in the evaluation framework:** According to Stake (1996) there is a difference between what the 'program people' want to know about their program and what 'outsiders' want to know. Stakeholders can therefore be classified as internal and external.

**Agreement of standards and performance indicators:** The framework must be specific to the evaluation context. In addition, it should clearly draw boundaries of what has to be evaluated, Burke (1992). The quantitative and qualitative performance indicators of the project must be understood by both evaluators.

## **Methodology for Evaluating**

**Theoretical framework:** The evaluation framework should recognize that good evaluation is neutral. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), evaluation frameworks must take into consideration, the power relations that may exist and pressurize the evaluator within the evaluation process. These power structures not only affect the relationships between those being evaluated, but also limit the practical ability of the evaluator to be a neutral outsider. In addition, the framework should also provide for understanding the plurality of value-bases existing simultaneously within the evaluation process, as well as multiple interests, agendas, and perceptions and perspectives.

In this regard, a systemic evaluation framework should be adopted, which according to Simon Zadek (1994) strike a balance between two ontological perspectives of *constructivism*, which seeks to mediate and reach consensus through accommodating different values and worldviews and perspectives) and *positivism*, which assist in decision making and action by making reference to reality, in order to bridge the construction of meaning with action. It provides opportunities for the evaluator to engage various stakeholders towards an agreement. In addition, the aims of the processes being evaluated, the goals and approaches used to evaluate these processes, and the descriptions of the processes themselves, are all determined by stakeholders.

This systemic evaluation approach is supported by Flood (1999) who describes it as characterized by facilitating learning and understanding about the impact of projects implemented, seeking to enhance the positive impact of the projects and dealing with the counter-intuitive consequences and questioning the value of chosen improvement strategies. He argues that evaluation is not about collecting data, but a product of a process of investigation and construction of meaning. An evaluation framework should according to Flood recognize that "...data is not waiting out there in volumes to be reaped like corn in an autumn harvest".

**Evaluation type, methods and tools:** For both formative and summative evaluation, planning should take into account the pros and cons of using internal program personnel and external consultants. In our case, the framework should provide for participatory evaluation, using both internal and external personnel to combine independence with understanding of the situation. Formative evaluation should be conducted at the beginning and during the implementation of the program, while summative evaluation should be conducted at the end of the program. In this respect, formative evaluation would be led internally by program personnel, while summative evaluation would be led by external consultants.

The argument for this choice of approach according to Worthen and Sanders (1987) is that "the internal evaluator is almost certain to know more about the program than any

outsider, but she may also be so close to the program that she is unable to be completely objective”. Seldom is there as much reason to question the objectivity of the external evaluator... and this is her greatest asset. Conversely, it is difficult for an external evaluator to ever learn as much about the program as the insider knows”.

Cronbach and his colleagues (1980) take an ethical perspective and argue that the credibility of evaluation studies lies in profession-wide arrangements that ensure the evaluator’s freedom to be honest, not in the inherent objectivity of the external review. Cross-validation of studies akin to that conducted in the physical sciences is a better way to obtain objectivity than by depending on the dogma of external evaluation. This argument is supported by Flood (1999) who suggests for triangulation of methods in an attempt to overcome the deficiencies of any one approach to evaluation by combining a number of them and capitalizing on their respective strengths. The idea is that no single approach is always superior. Evaluation should proceed in such a way that the process followed, “is recoverable by anyone interested in subjecting the work to critical scrutiny” This means documenting the thought processes and models that enabled people to do their work and to draw their conclusions.

In general, formative evaluation is best conducted by program personnel. Summative evaluation is best conducted by an external evaluator or agency. However, where resources may not allow, summative evaluation can be conducted internally by those within the organization who are some distance removed from the actual development of the program being evaluated. Proponents of systemic evaluation suggest that both formative and summative evaluation is essential because decisions are needed during the developmental stages of a program to improve and strengthen it, and again, when it has stabilized, to judge its final worth or determine its future”. In fact these two approaches may be co-joined in a comprehensive ongoing systemic evaluation”.

The evaluation framework should consider Patton (1996)’s view that “the role of evaluation has grown larger than the boundaries of formative and summative evaluation”. It should incorporate what Owen and Rogers (1999) identified as forms and approaches

to program evaluation which can be used in combination at different stages of both formative and summative program evaluation, noting that real evaluations can span one or more of these forms.

- a) Proactive – takes place before a program is designed to assist program planners to make decisions about what type of programme is needed. It places the evaluators as an adviser, providing evidence about what is known about policy development, what format of program is needed or how and organization may be changed to make it more effective.
- b) Clarificative – clarifies the internal structure of a program or policy.
- c) Interactive – provides information about delivery or implementation of a program or about selected components elements or activities. Can be concerned with the documentation or incremental improvement of an innovation, or establishing what is happening to help staff understand more fully how and why a program operates in a given way. Supports programs which are constantly changing and evolving. There is a strong formative flavor. Results more directed to middle managers and program implementers – those responsible for delivering the project at the local or site level.
- d) Monitoring – appropriate when a project is underway and ongoing. During implementation, monitoring evaluation is used to check, first that the program is on target in terms of its stated objectives. This evaluation provides managers with contextual up-to-date information on actual implementation progress as compared with targets, so that emphasis is on deviations from expected performance and suggestive corrective action.
- e) Impact – is summative, assessing the impact of a settled program. According to Simonelli (1996:17) it provides information about the final outcomes of the program, both expected and unexpected.

**Evaluation methods and tools:** Surveys and reviews will be conducted using focus group discussions, reports and statistics, observations and mapping techniques and guided questionnaires to solicit both qualitative and quantitative information.

## **Managing the Evaluation Framework**

**The quality of the Evaluator(s):** Particular attention should be paid to the qualifications, experience and credibility of evaluators. Such experience should be relevant to the methodological perspective of the evaluation. For a systemic evaluation, the evaluator should also possess skills in participatory methodologies. A team of consultants may be engaged to combine a variety of requisite skills. Principles and qualities such as independence, integrity and reliability, competence and objectivity are critical for an evaluator. Evaluators "...must not only be objective – they must be seen to be so" (Millichamp, 1996)

**Quality control,** defined by Burke (1992) as the method of inspection, in-process inspection and final inspection to determine if the product has met the required condition will be an integral part of the framework. The required condition or performance indicators will be laid down in the scope of work, specifications and the project quality plan as highlighted earlier. To ensure effective quality control, the framework should take into consideration, proposals that monitoring and evaluation (diagnosis) of the program should take much of the Program Manager's time.

The framework should take into consideration the costs of evaluation at every stage of the program. This should be defined in the Program Quality Control Plan during the program design phase, which is defined by Burke as a detailed document explaining how the project implementers will assure that the program will be delivered to stakeholders' satisfaction.

**Frequency of evaluation:** Monitoring will be conducted regularly throughout program implementation period through stakeholder review meetings, reports from media, courts, police, community, etc. Three major evaluations will be conducted at the development, midterm and end phases of the program.

## **Analysis and presentation of findings of the evaluation**

**Data analysis and presentation plan:** At any stage of the program development and implementation process, the evaluation framework should provide a clear plan for analyzing and disseminating findings.

Analysis of data involves some form of quantitative or qualitative measurement, which is a legitimate manipulation process by which numbers and labels are assigned to aspects of an organizational or societal context. Manipulation of data aids its interpretation and subsequently transformation into useful format – it aids learning –which is fed into the evaluation process (Flood, 1999).

Before a final report is prepared, the findings of the evaluation should be presented to all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process for comments and validation.

**Dissemination and use of findings:** **Interim progress reports** are presented during program implementation.

The **final report** should be distributed to all stakeholders. The language and packaging of the findings of the evaluation should suit different stakeholders.

An **action plan** should be developed to guide the implementation of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. According to Baker (1978) two important factors which influence the usefulness of formative evaluation are control and timing.

Information that reaches administrators too late for use in improving the program is patently useless.

If a program continues beyond the summative evaluation study, the results of that study may be used for both summative and, later formative evaluation purposes.

## Annex 2: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This study is conducted in partial fulfillment of the Master of Commerce Degree in Project Leadership and Management with the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### INTRODUCTION

**Title of Research:** Determinants of systems performance: An enquiry into Project Practitioners<sup>7</sup> understanding and experiences with HIV and AIDS Projects.

The **Purpose of this study** is to identify and describe factors that determine the performance of HIV and AIDS projects based on the experiences and perspectives of project practitioners. The study will be conducted among practitioners working on HIV and AIDS projects in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The study is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on project management. In addition, the study will identify some areas that may need further research, and provide specific recommendations and proposals on improving delivery of social development projects.

*There are no wrong responses to this study. The study seeks to construct knowledge and contribute to the improvement of project management practice based on your responses and those of other practitioners. Your responses will be treated as confidential.*

*Please indicate with a tick, if you would like to receive an electronic copy of the final report.*

Yes..... No.....

*E: mail address:..... Tel.....*

*Please provide as honest and detailed responses as possible. You can use symbolism, metaphors and diagrams to describe your responses if you wish.*

*I hope you will find the exercise a useful reflection on your own projects' practice.*

**All correspondence marked Urgent and Confidential should be submitted by 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005 to: Manasa Dzirikure, SADC Secretariat, P/Bag 0095, Gaborone, Botswana  
OR P.O Box 4738 Pretoria 0001, RSA**

**Tel: +267 71610458**

**+2673951863**

**E-mail: MDzirikure@sadc.int AND dzirim\_2005@yahoo.com**

<sup>7</sup> Project Practitioner /Manager is any individual with oversight, influence and accountability on the process and delivery of a project (s). Can be Director, Manager, Officer, Coordinator, Expert, Specialist, Consultant, Advisor, etc

**SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION & EXPERIENCE**

**1.0 Demographic information**

1.1 Name (Optional /pseudonym):.....

1.2 Age (in years):..... 1.3 SEX (male/female).....

1.4 Highest level of academic certification: .....

1.5 Level of Project Management Certification:.....

**2.0 Work experience:**

2.1 Current position /title (e.g. Project Manager, Director, Consultant, etc see footnote 1):  
.....

2.2. How long have you been at this level of post? .....years.....months

2.3 How long have you worked on HIV and AIDS Projects? .....years.....months

2.5 What were your previous posts and for how long did you occupy each? (Fill in Table below):

	Post	Period in post	
		Years	Months
1			
2			
3			
4			

2.6 Of the period that you have worked on HIV and AIDS projects, how many years have you worked at /for (Fill in both sides of table below - A and B ):

	A) Level of working with Projects				B) Type of Organisation			
	Local community	National	Regional <sup>8</sup>	International <sup>9</sup>	Govt	NGO	Private sector	Other .....
No. of years								

**SECTION B: PROJECT PERFORMANCE**

**3.0 Defining a Project**

3.1 In your own view, please describe for me what a Project is. (I am not looking for a text book definition. You may list phrases or words to describe).

**4.0 Defining Project performance**

4.1 In your own understanding, please define Project performance. (I am not looking for a text book definition. You may list phrases or words to describe)

4.2 Is your definition consistent with that considered by your organization? (Please explain your answer)

<sup>8</sup> At least 3 countries in Africa

<sup>9</sup> At least 3 countries in more than one continent

4.3 Is your definition consistent with that considered by other organizations you know or have worked for? (Please explain your answer)

#### **5.0 Measuring Project performance**

5.1 From your own experience, what are the ways for measuring performance of an HIV and AIDS Project? (Please list and describe your response)

5.2 Please describe for me, the characteristics of your “ideal process” for measuring Project performance.

5.3 In your efforts to establish the performance of the Project, what exactly do you measure? (Please list and describe if possible)

5.4 In your own experience, would you say that all organizations working on similar HIV and AIDS interventions (e.g. prevention among young people 10-24 years) measure the same things when they measure the Performance of their Projects? (Please explain your answer. Give examples where possible)

5.5 Some organizations prefer to use their own personnel to evaluate their projects while some prefer to use consultancy from outside their organization. From your experience, what do you prefer and why?

5.6 Reflecting on your experience with Project evaluations, please describe for me what would have gone wrong in instances where the evaluation process can be described as bad.

#### **6.0 Determinants of Project Performance**

6.1 From your experience, please reflect on what you consider to be the influences of success of HIV and AIDS Projects? (Please list as many as you can and explain)

6.2 From your experience, please reflect on what you consider to be the influences of failure of HIV and AIDS Projects? (Please list as many as you can and explain)

6.3 Some people believe that the success or failure of a Project can be predetermined from the onset. What do you think about this statement? (Please explain your answer)

6.4 At what point is an HIV and AIDS Project considered to start and at what point is it considered to have finished? (Explain or give details in your answer)

6.5 From your experience, what would you consider to be the main stages in the process of an HIV and AIDS Project? (Please list them and provide a brief description of each stage)

6.6 Based on your experiences, what is your comment on the view that a project goes through a specific life-cycle? (Please explain)

#### **7.0 Project Management as a vehicle for social change**

7.1 From your experience and your earlier definition of a Project, please comment on the use of “Projects” as a way of addressing the HIV and AIDS epidemic? (I am trying to get a sense of, to what extent you find it useful. Please explain your answer)

7.2 Apart from “Projects” is there any other better way you would suggest to control the HIV and AIDS epidemic? (Please explain your answer)

7.3 What do you think should be done to improve on Project Management as a way of delivering social development /HIV and AIDS services? (Please list and give a description of each idea)

7.4 How would you describe your “ideal” Project practitioner /manager? (Please describe both personal and professional attributes)

7.5 If you were requested to rename the Project Life Cycle, what new name would you give it? (Please give reasons for your answer. This question requires you to apply your own views, beliefs, ideas)

7.6 If you were the Key Note Speaker at a meeting attended by all HIV and AIDS practitioners in sub-Saharan Africa focusing on “Improving Performance of Projects to combat HIV and AIDS by 2025”, what would be your key message to the participants?

7.7 Please provide or refer me to, any reference materials, individuals, organizations that you think could enrich this study.

I sincerely appreciate your support to this study

Thank you

***This questionnaire is the sole responsibility of the researcher and should not be associated with the opinions or work of any organization or institution that the researcher may be associated or linked with.***