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Influence of stakeholder's involvement in project monitoring and evaluation on sustainability of community projects in Kenya: Case Study of Kenya Red Cross Integrated Community Projects in Tana River County

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Abstract

A successful project is one that is delivered within the budget, stipulated time according to the schedule, desirable quality, client satisfaction, stakeholder satisfaction and facility user satisfaction. However, most of projects in Kenya continue to face serious sustainability issue and especially NGOs and Governments funded projects with majority failing few years after completion. The study purposed to examine the influence of stakeholders' involvement on the sustainability of integrated community projects in Kenya: case of Kenya Red Cross integrated community projects in Tana River County. The Specific objective was to establish the influence of stakeholder's involvement in project monitoring and evaluation on sustainability of community projects. The Kenya Red Cross Integrated Community Project in Tana River County is one such project. The study adopted a descriptive research design where approximately 1419 participants were involved. The simple random sampling techniques were used to pick the respondents. Data was collected using questionnaire via electronic means. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that monitoring and evaluation influenced sustainability of community project and that monitoring, and evaluation were statistically significant. The study concluded that monitoring and evaluation influenced sustainability of community project though the variable depicted statistically significant and negative relationship. The study recommended project stakeholders to adopt a wide variety of resource mobilization tools and establishment of key structures and developing framework to help facilitate the coordination of community-wide efforts.

Keywords: *Stakeholders' involvement, Monitoring and evaluation, Sustainability*

1.1 Introduction

Globally, the rate of natural catastrophe continues to exhibit an upward trend in the recent decades (Guha-Sapir et al. 2012) and “the form and nature of emergency and disasters is fast shifting” (Boin 2009). Despite this situation, most of the people exposed to risks have attempted to build mechanism to cope with contemporary disasters just before they have successfully emerged out of previous disaster. Furthermore, these disasters have turned to be more severe and this poses a serious problem of integrating disaster risk reduction, climate change and international development. There are multiple aspects that affects sustainability of projects: they include planning and design, well-coordinated implementation, and monitoring and evaluation approach and hence the need to refine weak areas as augmentation is done on the functional areas (Isabalijaa, et al., 2011). Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical element of results-based management (Rest, Boily & Martin, 2011). Results-based management entails purposely collecting empirical evidence so as to determine the degree to which intended outcomes are being achieved so that modifications to the design and delivery of activities can be effected to enhance and account for performance in attaining expected results (Mayne, 2007). Additionally, monitoring and evaluation help stakeholders participating in projects to measure if progress is on track in line with expectations. Monitoring is the on-going collection and analysis of data that informs project managers if progress toward pre-determined goals is being met.

According to Kumar (2002), studies have shown that inclusiveness and active involvement of all stakeholders nurtures a deep sense of pride and ownership of the project. The active participation ensures that the project can outlive its existence to future generations. The one-man-show strategy robs the project of its momentum as individuals are weighed down by the heaviness of responsibilities. Stakeholder involvement is highly regarded as a critical area of sustainable community project. Globally, donor funded projects continue to complement the community’s role in the societal developmental needs such as access to social economic services namely: education, health, water, agriculture, environmental and achieving sustainable management (German, Ramisch & Verma, 2010). Similarly, sustainability in project perspective occupy centre stage as an important approach to address the increasingly devastating consequences of hazards and disasters. The long-term value of these projects is not limited to the creation of jobs, improved community relations, community empowerment, enhanced economic status, environmental restoration but also enhancement of the quality of life in the neighbourhood through environmental assessment and/or clean-up (Kizlik, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Institute of Economic Affairs (2014), projects are usually undertaken with the motive to yield long-term benefits even after the funding has been terminated. Sustainability of a project should ensure the benefits from a project accrue for extended periods of time that can justify the economic and social capital invested in the project (Bjarstig, 2017). However, most projects, implemented by local and foreign development organizations, do not necessarily produce intended results or the live of the projects becomes uncertain. A successful project is one that is delivered within the budget, stipulated time according to the schedule, desirable quality, client satisfaction, stakeholder satisfaction and facility user satisfaction. Most of the projects funded by the county governments do not meet some of the project objectives.

In spite of the overwhelming suggestions on how to undertake project stakeholder management, a constant stream of project failure stemming from unsatisfied stakeholders has been reported. Community participation in the projects at the lowest level has been poor, thus creating problems of operation and maintenance especially in water projects (Kwale County Development Plan Report, 2018). Most development projects have bailed or failed due to inadequacies of some basic participatory processes involving people and because of the blunders, management pitfalls emerge and impede the survival of the venture and their success. Coleman, Manyindo, Parker, and Schultz, (2019) views participation as an end on itself in supporting projects while some authors viewed participation as a means to an end through participatory need identification as well as participatory budgeting.

In Kenya, most projects implemented tend to experience difficulties with sustainability (Mburu, 2017). Poor sustainability has been depriving them from the returns expected of these investments despite funds spent on implementation of projects in Kenya (Wafula, 2017). Most of projects continue to face serious sustainability issue and especially NGOs and Governments funded projects with majority failing few years after completion. However, researchers' finds no research has been carried out touching on establishing the influence stakeholders' involvement and projects' sustainability in Kenya. It is against this backdrop that the study purpose to establish the influence stakeholders' involvement and sustainability of community projects in Kenya.

1.3 Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to assess the extent to which project monitoring and evaluation influence sustainability of community projects: A case of the Kenya Red Cross integrated projects in Tana River County. The study purposed to answer the question; "How does stakeholders' involvement in project monitoring and evaluation influences sustainability of community projects?"

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings drawn from of the study will be of value to the government, policymakers and Non-governmental organization in developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes for fostering sustainability of community projects. The results of the study will help the management with information necessary on enhancing efficiency of monitoring and evaluation processes geared towards building community resilience through appropriate interventions among vulnerable communities and groups in the country. It is expected that the findings will be of utmost value to scholars and academicians because they will gain knowledge on contribution of stakeholder involvement on sustainability of community of projects and also serve as a springboard for further research in related areas.

2.1 Literature Review

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Stakeholders Theory

This theory was proposed by Freeman (1994). According to this theory, the stakeholders of a project perceive that they have a stake in the project or the task and because of the perceived stake in the project, they have certain expectations and hence they adopt a certain type of behavior that is sometimes constructive or destructive. Overall, the central idea of stakeholder theory is to help managers to understand stakeholders and strategically manage them (Patton, 2008). The managerial importance of stakeholder engagement has demonstrated that just treatment of stakeholders is related to the long-term survival of the organization. Chinyio and Olomolaiye (2010) observed that stakeholders potentially influence enterprise's functioning, objectives, development, and consequently its ability to survive. The stakeholder theory has been described as a powerful means of understanding the firm in its environment. The approach is purposed to broaden the management's vision of its roles and responsibilities beyond the profit-orientation maxim and community identified in input-output models of the firm, to also include interests and claims of non-stockholding groups (Maina, 2013). According to Patton (2008), the stakeholder's model proposes that all community or groups with legitimate interests engaging in projects do so to obtain benefits and that there is no predetermined priority of one set of interests and benefits over another. The interest of associated corporations, prospective employees, prospective customers, and the public at large needs to be taken into consideration.

2.2.2 The General System Theory

Systems theory was first postulated in the 1940s by Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Initially the theory had been developed for biological sciences but its application was later incorporated into other fields of study after its modification into general systems theory. The theory define system as set of interrelated but interdependent components, attributes and internal relationships that interact in an environment. A system is a sophisticated arrangement of components that include individuals and their beliefs, and how their interaction in an environment. It follows that all systems are essentially made up of more than one interrelated components that constitutes an ordered whole and each of the sub-system can affects the rest of system either partly or wholly. The axiom that "a chain is as strong as the weakest" is best demonstrated by this theory. The implication of analogy is that reinforcing one component of the system will make the whole system stronger. Therefore, this theory provides a framework by which an individual can probe and/or identify any set of elements in a work relationship to yield expected outcome.

The public are normally involved in needs evaluation where they communicate their views regarding desired improvements, prioritizing goals and reaching consensus with agencies for synergy building by engaging in planning and designing interventions. These interventions help in devising suitable objectives, setting targets, and criticizing plans in light of indigenous knowledge in relation to disaster management. In applying the system theory, the researcher considers a project as system that comprise of various elements that include the community, the donors, implementing agencies and recipient, among others. They are interdependent and every stakeholder performs a key role that impact on the success of a community integrated resilience building projects. This imply that neglecting stakeholder involvement practices will have an effect on the project sustainability.

2.3 Empirical studies

Participation of stakeholders in community projects enable community project to function effectively, achieve collective goals, achieve success in development Contribution of stakeholders in community project cannot be over emphasized. Stakeholder involvement has been proven as a key instrument to achieving successful and sustainable projects at the community level (PMI, 2014). Involving stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of community projects enhance implementation of key decisions, hasten decision making process and correct deviations to survivability of the programmes. Kumar (2002), highlighted a number of benefits arising from involvement in projects: involvement ensures efficiency as people are the largest resources needed to meet common goals. He also argues that when people participate projects are concluded on schedule and also they can be involved in conducting monitoring and evaluation that helps them to keep track of the project. This fosters effectiveness of the initiatives.

It is important to include the opinions, choices, needs and feelings of the residents and primary beneficiaries of development plans and projects to attain sustainable projects (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). In addition, when project stakeholders are allowed some leeway to make decision regarding what is best for them not only bolster their creativity it also result to empowerment (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Participation of community in decision making process leads to better designed projects, better targeted benefits, more cost effective projects, more equitable sharing of project value, less corruption, reinforced community capacity to implement own development initiatives and enhance the match between the target of the community and what it obtains (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Engaging the stakeholders in assessing the progress of the community projects contribute to continuity of the project even after its completion. This view is supported by Glass (2010) that contribution of stakeholders through developing of project progress reporting, providing feedbacks of programs performance and provision of resources influence sustainability of the project. Project managers found stakeholder's involvement as an instrument to effective monitoring of community programmes to achieve sustainable community development, achieving the vision and goals the community resilience projects. (Katiku, 2011). Empirical studies have confirmed that involving stakeholders determine the sustainability of projects. This is supported by Boon et al (2012) that numerous community projects in Ghana, toilet building, water supply boreholes and construction of toilet facilities achieved success due to stakeholder participation.

In Nigeria, the implementation of development project in the rural region failed to achieve expected goals due to inadequately involving the stakeholders. A study by Maina (2013) revealed that involving the stakeholder's foster identification of project gaps, errors and areas that needs attentions, selection of the best strategies to achieve the goals and foster redesigning of the project structure where necessary. A study by Golicha (2010) assessed the level of participation of engagement in community projects in Garissa County, Kenya. The study found that inadequate engagement of stakeholders contributed to poor planning, poor development of project objectives. A further study by Maweu, (2015) assessed the level of stakeholder's participation in community project risk management in Turkana and the primary findings indicated that stakeholders' participate actively in project risk management oriented tasks where they derived financial benefits.

Maijo (2021) sought to assess the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems on the sustainability of community based projects in Kisarawe District, Tanzania and the findings concluded that monitoring and evaluation systems was effective on the sustainability of

community projects. The study concludes that sustainability of community based projects depends on other factors as community participation, adequate finance and community capacity building. Biwott,(2020) in his paper sought to analyze the influence of community participation on sustainability of county government funded water projects in Elgeyo Marakwet County and found out that majority of the community leaders members participated in county government water projects identification; 59% of community leadership members participated in project planning of water projects; 49.3% of community leaders participated in resource mobilization of water projects; and that 42.7% of community leaders participated in oversight of water projects.

Sustainability is conceptualized as the long lasting enjoyment of the benefits and/or values of projects. The focus is on sustaining the flow of benefits into the future rather than sustainable programs or operations itself. The concept of sustainable benefits does not necessarily mean continuation of “AID” funded activities to sustain the project but rather the adoption of new structures, ownership by communities and support by locally available resources to ensure the continuous flow of benefits (Tembo, 2003). As a result, the nature of projects has to change taking into account the project management cycle that include proper design, planning, effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation and the sustainability as well (Norton, 2005).

The concept of sustainability was first employed in relation to natural resources and how they should be used. As knowledge and human capability increased over time, resources have actually also increased (Taylor, 1993). Over the years, the concept of project sustainability has broadened in scope. Project sustainability is generally supported through projects success, and the benefits realized are maintained even long after the end of the project. Within the development community, the notion of sustainability can be applied to financial resources, including project funds indicating that projects and donor support are not limitless and must be used efficiently in ways that local actors support it so that benefit flows are sustained.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a presentation of the hypothesized relationship between one or multiple variables in a study. The conceptual framework depicts the relationship stakeholder’s involvement in monitoring and evaluation as an independent variable and sustainability of community projects as a dependent variable.

Independent Variable



Dependent Variable



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Research Methodology

The paper used descriptive research design to gather and analyze information to assess the influence of stakeholders’ involvement in monitoring and evaluation on sustainability of community projects in Kenya focusing on Integrated Community Resilience Building Projects in

Tana River Basin, Kenya. The population consisted of 1419 individuals involved in Kenya Red Cross Integrated Community Project. The study used Slovin formula and Neyman allocation formula by Mathew et al., (2013) to select 312 respondents, without violating the principle of proportionate stratified random sampling method. The questionnaires were mainly administered electronically and in a few cases drop–pick later strategy was employed in order to satisfy Covid-19 health protocols and guidelines outlined by WHO and Ministry of Health.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study collected 230 questionnaires out of the possible target of 312 questionnaires. This data collection process gave a return rate of 73.72% that was achieved through frequent reminders calls to the interviewees to fill and hand in their questionnaires. The 26.28 % non-response rate can be attributed to the challenges posed by ministry of health guidelines regarding Covid19 pandemic. Kothari (2014) argues that a return rate above 50% is considered fit for analysis and to make generalization of the study.

4.2 Stakeholders Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation

The summary of the research findings on the level of stakeholder’s involvement in monitoring and evaluation is presented in Table 1

Table 1: The Level of Stakeholders Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	160	69.60
No	70	30.40
Total	230	100.00

Source: Author (2021)

From the findings presented in Table 1, 69.60% of respondents indicated that they were involved in monitoring and evaluation, while 30.40% of respondents indicated that they were not actively involved in monitoring and evaluation process.

Table 2 depicts the research findings on the level of stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation

Table 2: Level of Stakeholder Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation

	Frequency	Percent
Very great Extent	15	6.50
Great Extent	111	48.30
Moderate Extent	33	14.30
Less Extent	56	24.40
No Extent	15	6.50
Total	230	100.00

Source: Author (2021)

The findings in Table 2 showed that 48.30% of the respondents agreed that stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation influenced projects’ sustainability in the community to a great extent, and 24.40% of the respondents agreed to a less extent and 6.50% of the interviewees concurred to a very great extent. Moreover, 14.30% of the respondents concurred to a moderate extent that stakeholder involvement in monitoring activities influenced projects’ sustainability. However, 6.50% of the interviewees were of opinion that stakeholder involvement in monitoring exercise did not affects sustainability of projects at all.

Table 3 illustrates the research findings on monitoring and evaluation on sustainability of community projects

Table 3: Monitoring and Evaluation on Sustainability of Community Projects

	Mean	Std. Dev
Foster project sustainability progress reporting	3.613	1.439
Generating innovation through stakeholder engagement	3.469	1.416
There is increased response controls	3.652	1.457
Enhance effective decision making	3.130	1.288
Identifying sustainability activities challenges	3.621	1.423
Stakeholders Influence revising of budgeting	3.473	0.894
Justifying Project costs	3.687	1.224
Stakeholders helps in correction of errors	3.878	1.091

Source: Author (2021)

The findings of the study as shown in Table 3 revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that stakeholders help in correction of errors (M=3.878,SD=1.091), monitoring and evaluation guides in justifying project costs (M=3.687,SD=1.224), there was increased response controls(M=3.652,SD=1.457),helps in identifying sustainability activities challenges(M=3.621,SD=1.423) and that it fosters project sustainability progress reporting(M=3.613,SD=1.439). However, most of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that stakeholders influence revising of budgeting(M=3.473,SD=0.894),help in generating innovation through stakeholder engagement(M=3.469,SD=1.416),, and that it enhance effective decision making(M=3.130,SD=1.288).

The results concurred with the findings of Altschuld and Kumar (2010) who argued that the involvement of local people in conception, execution, monitoring and evaluation of development projects has become very central to attaining sustainable development. Additionally, the results of the study affirm the findings of Boyer et al (2008) who observed that project progress reporting should be considered as customary practice and the community must be equipped to actively participate so as to monitor the progress of the community projects; this minimizes the opportunity of embezzlement of project resources. According to the World Bank (2010), community participation in M&E is critical in project sustainability since: it offers new ways of assessing and learning from change that are more inclusive and more responsive to the needs and aspirations of those most directly affected; is geared towards not only measuring the effectiveness of a project, but also towards building ownership, empowering beneficiaries, building accountability and transparency and taking corrective actions to improve performance and outcomes. This was also supported by views of (Patton, 1997) who argued that, monitoring forms an integral part of all

successful projects and without access to accurate and timely information, it is difficult if not impossible to manage an activity, project or program effectively.

5.1 Summary of the Research Findings

The study established that stakeholders were involved in monitoring and evaluation of community project and that stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation influenced sustainability of community projects to a great extent. Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that stakeholder's involvement in monitoring and evaluation help in correction of errors, monitoring and evaluation guides in justifying project costs, increased response controls, monitoring and evaluation helps in identifying sustainability activities challenges, and that it fosters project sustainability progress reporting. However, the study inconclusively found out that stakeholder's influence revising of budgeting, monitoring and evaluation helps in generating innovation through stakeholder engagement, and that it enhances effective decision making.

6.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

From the results, the study concluded that monitoring and evaluation had a statistically significant and negative relationship with sustainability of community projects. The study also concluded that stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation greatly influenced sustainability of community projects. Moreover, the concluded that stakeholder's involvement in monitoring and evaluation help in correction of errors, monitoring and evaluation guides in justifying project costs, increased response controls, monitoring and evaluation helps in identifying sustainability activities challenges, and that it fosters project sustainability progress reporting.

The study recommended that insurance regulator as well as the PSV underwriters should proactively attempt to eradicate fraudulent activities in the sector through fraud detection and deterrence mechanisms. The study further recommended proper identification of valuable and efficient utilization of resources. The process provides the most needed information to guide strategic planning, to design and execute projects, and to appropriate, and re- appropriate resources in the most efficient ways in an effort to bolster sustainability of the project.

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