

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Sustainability of Government Sponsored Community Based Projects in the Rural Areas in Kenya

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Abstract:

This research aimed at studying the Sustainability of Government sponsored community based projects in the rural areas in Kenya. The Researcher relied on secondary data. Descriptive research method was used to analyze the data collected. The study revealed that for sustainability of Government sponsored projects to be sustainable even after the withdrawal of funding or completion and commissioning of the project, several factors needed to be put into mind. The researcher found that, community participation, including them being picked for the management committee, educating them about the benefits of the project to them, allowing them to partake in making of key decisions pertaining the project implementation and allowing them to contribute in formulating the objectives and goals of the project was key to its sustainability. Moreover, risk management should also be factored in during the project designing.

Keywords: *Community Based Projects (CBPR), Community Promoters.*

1. Introduction

The realization of project sustainability is a continuous process and not a single day's endeavor throughout the lifetime of a project (Wanjohi, 2010). A project that is viewed as sustainable today, may not be viewed so tomorrow thus calling for a more informed approach to its implementation, (Peter, Geoffrey, Kirui and Cyrilla, 2015). Besides sustainability being one of the values of engagement fundamental to a project's identity and role, it is also a daunting challenge for all projects, (Young-Hoon Kwak, 2005). An all-inclusive and sustainable project management should besides being given priority, rise above its technical aspects to include other main rudiments of sustainability to improve chances of project's success, (Belay, and Benjamine, 2014).

Project Sustainability for Community based projects should be married with development, (Wasilwa, 2015). To effectively put this concept in to operation, a project should give attention not only to institutional factors but also on a number of other scopes of sustainability. Resource monitoring and proper utilization are a crucial aspect of the entire project for effective sustainability. Notwithstanding project sustainable impacts, the overall enabling environment is a key aspect determining the performance and success of any project, (Bjarne, 2007). Therefore, it is not possible to claim lasting impacts in terms of project sustainability and success without calling to mind, the aspect of development.

Young-Hoon Kwak (2005), notes that, effective monitoring and evaluation of a project's operation, helps in achieving sustainability in various means. This is by identifying the strong and weak areas during the project implementation phase. This provides chances of making possible adjustments brought about by changes that might have occurred in the project setting. Moreover, it can bring into manifestation latent associations among discrete project constituents that augment the general control of the project workings. Additionally, it can institute steadfast pointers for project sustainability. This is an important phase in evaluating achievements against significant yardsticks.

1.1. Problem Statement

Kenya's vision 2030 which is her road map to achieving millennium development goals was launched in 2006 and seeks to guide the country in her quest till 2030. This would make Kenya become a middle-income earning Country by providing quality life to its citizens. One of the objectives of the strategic initiative is to have development through "an all-inclusive and participatory stakeholder consultative process; involving Kenyans from all parts of the country" (Government of Kenya, 2009). This in itself seeks to make Kenya's population a self-sustainable lot. This is a key sector under social pillar that speaks more about equity and poverty elimination.

Ever since the conception of vision 2030 blue print, development aid to Kenya's rural communities has been rising and in 2007, it stood at \$770M (Government of Kenya, 2009). Currently, projects in the rural areas have received support from international organizations and the Kenyan government. In its endeavor to realize the potential compounded in this sector, every year the Kenyan Government allocates funds in the national budget for various developmental projects in different sectors. The figures for the allocation vary every based on the sectors that the Government is giving priority. In Kenya, a deprived economic environment and a fast growing population has resulted in 50% of Kenyans currently living in below the poverty line, (Mwaura and Nguigi, 2014).

The government through its agencies has identified various flagship projects in different counties that target at resolving varied economic, political and social challenges bedeviling Kenyans and largely those in the rural areas. During the fiscal year 2015/16 budget the Government allocated 20.8 billion for on-going irrigation projects countrywide, KSh 4.9 billion to subsidize fertilizer and seeds and KSh 2.1 billion for Affirmative Action for Social Development, (Government of Kenya, 2016). These projects found in various Counties include the Galana Irrigation project in Tana River County, Thwake Water Dam project in Makueni county e.tc.

Excerpts from the Ministry of Devolution through a report on Community Development Trust Fund shows that 45% of community based projects in the rural areas funded by the Kenyan Government between the year 2000 and 2014 have not met their primary objectives. While the Government objectively funds projects in the rural areas in a bid to improve the living standards of habitants of these areas, many project experience challenges with the sustainability. A report from the Ministry of Planning (2009), Machakos County which has a population of 1,098,584 million, a land size of 5,953 square Kilometers and endowed with 40 CBO projects funded by the Government in fiscal 2015/16 lags has poverty levels at 35%. This situation paints a close picture of what to expect in other counties in Kenya. This therefore, informs an impending socio-economic challenge.

1.2. Research Objectives

The specific objective for the study was;

To study factors that affect sustainability of Government sponsored Community based projects in the rural areas in Kenya.

General objectives of the study were to;

- i. Examine the contribution of community participation in the sustainability of Community Based Projects in the rural areas in Kenya,
- ii. Determine the relationship between project governance and the sustainability of Government sponsored Community Based Projects in the rural areas in Kenya,
- iii. Establish the role of Capacity Building in the sustainability of Community Based Projects in the rural areas in Kenya.
- iv. Assess the moderating effect of policy implementation on the relationship between project governance, Capacity building, Community participation and the sustainability of Government Sponsored Community Based Projects

2. Empirical Literature Review

Adam and Omer (2015), discuss project sustainability as the ability to meet objectives defined in terms of benefits levels. This is the ability of the project management team to initiate a process by which benefits are maintained. In the context of Government sponsored projects, sustainability can be defined as the continuation of benefits after the withdrawal of the financial support or after the project has been completed, (Mwaura and Ngugi, 2014). Projects should continue to deliver their intended benefits over long period of time. As such, a key definitive feature of a sustainable project would be if it continues to deliver high level benefits after the Government ends major financial, managerial and technical support, (Mwaura and Ngugi, 2014).

To enhance project sustainability, a rigorous sustainability analysis (plan) is needed at the time of formulation of a project (Bjarne, 2007). Such an analysis which is to be followed up by development of sustainability strategies will assist in incorporating the elements of sustainability, right at the design stage of a project, (David and Roland, 2007). Anticipating changes by discussing them and adapting to them are keys to long-term sustainability. It is indispensable that, projects maintain their capability to adjust to variations in the operating environment, (Harold, 2003). Excessively stiff project structures provide little window for community contribution, lack the ability to incorporate vital lessons and are less prepared to offer sustenance to the less privileged members of community. Institutional partnering provisions should factor their ability to evolve with time as openings for partnership with new teams come and go, (Belay, and Benjamine, 2014).

Project Managers should contemplate the use of substitute resources so as to improve on resource management, (McDade, 2004). Projects should prioritize the involvement of existing community assets and structures over the acquisition of new resources. They must work to adopt more understanding of the balance posed by projected gains from any activity they might be engaged in, and the macro changes needed for resource protection, (Adam and Omer, 2015). Project managers should see to it that the social structures adapt to the varying social developments in the community-based projects to promote project sustainability, (Peter, Geoffrey, Kirui and Cyrilla, 2015).The sustainability of project benefits in these areas will yield more potential if project managers look for ways to facilitate nurturing of the capacity of existing community resources. This is not limited to viewing all other participants in the community as inferiors or competing agents but as true partners and involving them in the planning of the project and its implementation. With good management, sufficient local resources and their capacity should be there to carry on the project mandate in the event that external resources are not there, (Mc Dade, 2004).

To improve livelihoods, Adam and Omer (2015), identify a range of factors that are vital to attaining sustainable results and impact from Government-sponsored projects in the rural areas. Project ownership by a community is one critical feature contributing to the sustainability of project. If possible, this should allow the participation of all stakeholders at all phases of the project cycle. While many projects contain participatory measures in their plan, those that realize sustainability input commitment to their course, putting it into exercise profound concepts of attentive dedication, and appropriate responsive measures whenever needed. Such successful projects put community needs at the forefront during their designing. Strategies with sound sustainability outcomes, more often embrace plans for beneficiaries to take charge of both outside and interior resources, which conversely encourages a grander feeling of ownership. By successfully integrating all stakeholders into the project's activities, it will help establish local ownership of the project and significantly increased awareness of the project development model.

A key element in sustainable project outcomes is a design based on an all-inclusive reflection of occupational systems, human needs and openings, (Sarfaraz and Edmunds, 2013). Narrow sector-focused interventions can be a threat to sustainability in several ways. Correspondingly, better-quality economic status can be met halfway by shocks that reduce or extinguish domestic and communal assets. If projects lack resilience when met by of natural, social or economic shocks, project impacts can easily be mislaid. Flexibility in project structure grows the capacity of a project to be demand-oriented with local talents that make use of native knowledge and applications hence promoting community ownership and sustainability. Consequently, flexibility will help in achieving rapid adaptation to changing situations, and new openings.

Olukotun (2012), points out that enhancing project stakeholders' risk management capability is vital to long-term project sustainability. This involves the documentation of risks that can jeopardize the flow of benefits to the project beneficiaries. Risk extenuation strategies need to be reliable and implementable, more so in their response to potential societal risks such as omission of vulnerable population or absence of socio-political support by the ruling classes. Mitigating factors like emergency kitties and insurance have the likelihood of contributing to the sustainability of project undertakings and goals. With this being factored in during project's planning, it will better its resilience and ability to contain the risks it faces. However, project Managers need to lead their teams in identifying potential risks that might affect their project and look for sustainable solutions that suit their operating environment. Monitoring and controlling of resources utilization that comprise of those procedures effected to observe project implementation so that possible challenges can be recognized in appropriately and remedial actions taken, should be put as a critical part in the life cycle of any project.

Project design that pays attention to the available resources and their conservation with an aim of incorporating measures to mainstream such considerations into the economic stands better chances of reaping long-term benefits. Fostering alliances with effective, viable institutions that are involved in mutual action is crucial too. Moreover, environmental risk mitigation and measuring of such impacts by projects is a major factor to their success, (Ofuoku, 2012).

Belay and Benjamin (2014), note that, establishment of Community based projects requires technical and financial capacity for them to be self-reliant after the donor support. In addition to this, an unswerving and objective means to monitoring and evaluation of projects is critical in attaining sustainability. If project managers get less information about the planned and unplanned changes resulting from project interpositions, they will suffer an inability to make alterations in their strategy and execution of undertakings in response to circumstantial aspects. Such managers will also not be in a position to articulate or accomplish fitting exit strategies which are important modules a for project sustainability.

2.1. Reasons for Community Participation

Development through community projects may carry less value if it does not tap potentials of the beneficiaries who are not only the chief beneficiaries but also the key reason for the project's existence, (Nyaguthii and Oyugi, 2013). Sustainability of any community based project will rely more on how the beneficiaries are involved in the buildup and execution strategies for the projects. Benefiting projects identification, committee constitution, project objectives, and project running needs, need to have the involvement of the benefitting community. This involvement should start even during the planning stage when vital decisions about the objectives of the projects are being set. Influential people in the society should not be the only ones bestowed with the responsibility of scouting for viable projects for the community as well as planning and running them. As Adam and Omer (2015), note, the absolute involvement of local communities as active stakeholders and equivalent associates whose contributions are crucial to the project's success, should never be dismissed. This factor may however, be subject to how soon and successful a project becomes resilient to the many changes that come along its way.

Ademola (2008), notes that, since project members may be the ultimate beneficiaries of development projects, they therefore have a major stake in it. As such, they must be the key participants whose views, choices, needs and feelings must be taken into account if sustainable development is to be achieved. Consequently, there is a need to bring people closer to the Government other than moving the Government close to the people. Barasa and Jalagat (2013), argue that participation of community members has many advantages. Among them; the allowing of people to form their capabilities, recognize opportunities and own the project. This contributes to project's efficacy and sustainability.

Community support raises project efficiency, which impacts positively on project sustainability (Chapel, 2005; Ababa, 2013). Kumar, (2012), identifies some benefits accruing from the participation of people in a project. These are; it ensures efficient utilization of resources as people work together towards achieving their objectives. If the objective is to construct some classrooms, they are more likely to travel together on the road to the defined direction. Secondly, a community's participation nurtures effectiveness and hence a project may be finalized within the scheduled time. The communities can then carry out monitoring and evaluation to come up with a progress report. Thirdly, it increases self-sufficiency by reducing dependency. People would not wish to rely on the Government to handle all their challenges, (Barasa and Jalagat, 2013). With active participation and involvement in the process of development, it is possible to break the mentality of dependency and utilize their own resources; human and material. This participation can be a way to ensuring that the stream of benefits to the communities is within cost-effective operations hence ensuring that resources are available to cover the intended benefiting community widely. Again, chances of corruption cases within the management of the projects may be very minimal. Further to these, it has the potential to improve the alignment of a community needs and what it requires the Government to support them in. Moreover, it can lead to more equitable distribution of project benefits amongst the community members. It may also lead to better designed and thought out projects besides yielding more precise benefits that are cost effective, (Kumar, 2012).

Ademola (2008), continues to say that, it is not only the level of financial and technical support in projects that matter most, but the active sharing of participation in decision making when undertaking community initiatives. Integration with, and building on home-grown management systems stimulates project sustainability, (Mulwa, 2010). Rather than imposing development projects on a community, its members should be allowed to participate meaningfully in project planning and execution.

2.2. Participation Management and Sustainability

Adam and Omer (2015), note, for communities to be fully represented and engaged in the affairs of any project that is geared towards them, there should be some members and partners who run the affairs of the project. In this sense there is a need for an advisory committee or steering committee and Government representative; ministry officials. Clear guidelines should be drafted on who, where, when and how they are to participate in the project. It is in these committees that the projects objectives, vision and mission should be correctly spelled out and executed. Adam and Omer (2015), propose the use of bottom-up approach in governing the projects by affording strong partnership of beneficiaries in the project and implementation modalities to a level of internalization of the project.

Ofuoku (2012), says that, communities need to be organized through formation of community development committees, regular meetings of community leaders and division of tasks. Members of these committees should be elected by the community and should be people with the interests of the community at heart. Furthermore, they should be people of great integrity and unquestionable character who need to take care of the resources bestowed upon them. These committees should hold meetings regularly which should address issues related to the development and the efforts towards development of the community. These meetings should also discuss how the community should be involved in the affairs of the projects with the level of participation being increased so as to attain possible high levels of sustainability of such projects.

Chutarat and Suphattharachai (2012), bring out some important benefits for community participation. In that it increases effectiveness by granting the beneficiary community a say in deciding the objectives and strategies in the project. It is such objectives that form the mental picture of the final product that will be borne by the project activities. The utilization of local resources will generate a sense of ownership over the development interventions by the local people when coupled with their involvement. Moreover, when communities are involved in projects initiation and implementation, there are high chances and assurance of sustainability. However, this may be subject to the awareness of the projects objectives and community needs.

Since projects' implementation may come with changes. There is need to have change agents in the wider community development, (Ofuoku, 2012). Key opinion leaders and other influential people who have a considerable following and who have a political goodwill are potential candidates. Community leaders who have a greater know-how of the participatory development in the context of national development should also be sought to assist the community in the running of their projects.

2.3. Sustainability Challenges

Barasa and Jalagat (2013), opine that, participation does not occur in isolation but in a socio-political context. As such, sustainability of community based projects may be hindered by obstacles that prohibit effective people's participation. This may include structural obstacles that are mainly accountable for the existence of inactiveness and dependence that is prevalent with rural communities. Moreover, administrative structures that are control-oriented may offer limited opportunities for the local communities to contribute in making own decisions or in controlling their resources. Conversely, social obstacles like the dependency-mentality, the culture of silence, domination of local elite or gender inequality contribute largely to lack of people participation, which is a big challenge towards a project's sustainability (Adam and Omer, 2015).

Majority of rural communities are disadvantaged by having little, if any of organizational and management skills, (Barasa and Jalagat, 2013). This inadequacy is likely to render the community members; who are the project owners to intentional mismanagement and other forms of manipulations by the few elite community members who may use the projects for their own benefits. Lack of these skills may fail project's success.

3. Literature Critique and Research Gaps

Adam and Omer (2015) carried out a study on "The factors affecting project sustainability beyond donor's support: The case of area Development scheme in Umkadad Locality, North Darfur Satet, Western Sudan". The study was done in a country that has a different social, political and economic setting from Kenya and had emphasis on projects funded by the UN. There is a need to carry out a similar study in Kenya which has a different social, economic and political setting than Sudan. The study observed that, most of the projects failed after the donor's withdrawal mainly because of poor resources management and lack of the national government's support. As Mwaura and Ngugi, (2014) note, projects that have good project management practices and had good governance, performed well. It is important that projects are established with clear objectives with a view to, ensuring sustainable development of their benefits. This will be possible if all stakeholders are involved in the activities of the project and their potentials harnessed (Francis and Tubey, 2013).

A study done by Peter, Geoffrey, Kirui and Cyrilla, (2015) on the Dilemma in the sustainability of community based projects in Kenya had the author concentrate on social-cultural, political and economic factors affecting the sustainability of process. However there are other determinants of project sustainability besides these factors. It is prudent that other factors like unforeseen natural occurrences and risk and its management be studied to find their contribution to projects' sustainability.

4. Conclusion

The cornerstone of the success of community based development projects is the active involvement of the members of the beneficiary community in at least all aspects of the project design, planning, execution, implementation and even follow-up. When the community members are involved in making key decisions, participation becomes self-initiated. This is mainly because there is a possibility of them having lived together for over a long period of time, have participated in various community activities together, they are used to doing things together that have common effects on them. In line with such thinking, projects which are widely consulted are more accepted and seen as successful. This has more impact on the sustainability. With the evolvement of technology and with rural habitants becoming more aware of what happens around them by use of the modern communication gadgets, participation of communities should be taken as the new vision that seeks to put rural communities in steering positions and accord them powers, right, privileges and obligations enabling them to ensure sustainability of their projects.

Government through its various agencies needs to empower rural communities by allocating enough resources to train community promoters who play a pivotal role in coordinating grassroots activities on behalf of the Government where majority of these initiatives take place. Consequently, for sustainability to be realized, these community promoters need to be accountable and transparent.

As Emmanuel and Eunice (2013), say, there is a growing need to stress the paradigm shift in development with participatory with diversified approach to human needs which are applicable to each situational context. Without proper planning and orientation of community based projects, on every aspect of socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political, it is evident these initiatives may not live to realize their full potential that they were meant to be. Project sustainability therefore, is one of the most critical challenges for not only internationally sponsored organizations but also for the Government sponsored community based projects.

5. Recommendations

Sustainability of community based projects and its success rate largely depends on the environmental set up of the project. However, there are multiple dimensions for this to happen. Majorly, we need to build institutions that are self-sustaining after the projects ends. Secondly, there is a need to develop families and communities at large, to take deliberate action to augment individual and general capacity of every member and respond positively to any change that might cause an influence to the immediate people's socio-economic welfare. Thirdly, for sustainability to thrive, sustainable management systems should be enhanced in order to maintain a stable resource base and avoid overexploitation of the available resources.

Risk management which is a key factor for the project design, should also be factored in during the project development cycle owing to the prevailing social-cultural diversity in Kenya. Over and above all, structural changes aimed at empowering poor and marginalized rural households need to be supported.

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