

The Role of Planning on Performance of Community Projects in Kenya

Josphat O. Amadi

School of Continuing and Distance Education, University of Nairobi

Abstract

Community Based Organizations have had a tremendous positive impact on development in many Countries around the world. In developing countries, community projects have made it possible for many local communities to see the light of day through programs such as Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable clean water provision, Construction of places of worship, schools among others. In Kenya, an estimated two million people are being positively impacted by community based projects efforts. When a community decides to come up with a development project, it is always critical to go through a project cycle and look at the key significance of their intended project, what they want to achieve, their goals, focus, the resources needed, the skills they require and the technical knowhow. It is during this stage of brainstorming that has been referred to as Initiation stage. It has been observed that in the project initiation, it is important to involve the whole community through participation in planning, providing views on what they want and how they want the project to run and how it will be executed. This is critical since it helps in bridging confidence between the community and the donor or government. It has been observed that performance and success of the projects have a high relation to how they were initiated and the community involvement. This paper seeks to study and establish the relationship that exists between the initiation of the projects and their performance in Kakamega County.

Keywords: Planning, as used here, it encompasses community project initiation

1.0 Introduction

Planning is one of the fundamentals of modern life. Henry Fayol (1925), a management theorist defines planning as examining the future, deciding what needs to be done and developing a plan of action. He adds that Strategic planning is a systematic process of envisioning a desired future, and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them. Jelagat and Barasa (2013) defines Project planning as a systematic sequencing and scheduling of the tasks comprising a project. They further define Community project planning as a public participatory and usually interactive form of town or neighborhood planning and design in which diverse community members (also called stakeholders) contribute towards formulation of the goals, objectives, planning, resource identification and direction, planned project implementations and re-evaluation of documented local planning policy. Wendell (2010) argues that without proper planning, performance of a community project will not achieve much in terms of outputs, expectations and even the sustainability of it is not guaranteed.

Community Based Organizations have had a tremendous positive impact on development in many Countries around the world. In developing countries, community projects have made it possible for many local communities to see the light of day through programs such as Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable clean water provision, Construction of places of worship, schools among others. In Kenya, an estimated two million people are being positively impacted by community based projects efforts. The focus of CBPs has included interventions in education, water, sanitation, health care, agriculture, spiritual nurture, community capacity building as well as micro-enterprise development (Atakpa 2013). Community based development projects are planned for a certain period of time called gestation period or life-span after which they come to an end and the community is expected to continue running the project and make them self-sustaining.

Government organs and NGOs in partnership with communities do establish community based development projects. However, the project activities collapse following the phase-out of funders support. *Javed et al* (2012) and an evaluation report by World Vision (2013) indicate that, most community development projects have failed to sustain themselves, become self-reliant and the communities have failed to continue running them after funding organizations withdraw their support. Some factors which should have been worked out, in order to stop this trend of projects collapsing are not done despite support being meant for a specified period with the objective of making the projects self-reliant.

Rono *et al* (2010) observes that though economic reasons, internal policies and structural rigidities may partly account for the poor performance of local projects and consequently of rural development, explanatory factors responsible for this trend have not been clearly identified and widely researched. However, it has been hypothesized that participation is influenced by the availability of conducive opportunities and resources. He continues to argue that socio-economic factors such as education, rural or urban residence, sex, age, marital status, income, religion and family size influence participation. They argue that if the score on each of these variables is low then participation is reduced and in that context, development becomes insignificant.

Javed *et al* (2012) identifies two types of Community projects:

a) Project with Tangible Product

Those projects which produce products that can be valued in monetary terms, generally aim to increase the production of goods and services.

- Which are sold or not sold but for which a market exists. For example industrial projects, power development projects, agricultural, tourism or small industry projects, or credit for firm projects etc
- Which are provided without direct payment by beneficiaries or whose price is not determined by commercial considerations, but whose benefits can be easily valued. For example road infrastructure, professional training and agricultural extension projects etc.

b) Project with Non -Tangible Product

The products which cannot be accurately valued in monetary terms without carrying out research which exceeds the time and resources usually available to analyst, making major assumption of the project purpose. The utility of such projects need not necessarily be valued. The example includes project dealing with health, education, urban development, (e.g sewerage), social services, institutional reforms or environmental conservations. Different development models apply according to the type of the project. For example Long Frame Matrix is specially applied to non –tangible projects.

Nyamasege and Mburu (2015) identified the following phases of a project.

- a) Project Initiation- this phase deals with issues of Scope of project, the resources required and the time scale and Project structure.
- b) Project Planning- it has components of resource plan, stakeholders plan and financial plan.
- c) Project Execution- It has components of time, quality and cost of implementation.
- d) Project Closure-this phase deals with handing over of the project to be fully operated, maintained and sustained by the community.

All the above phases will have the final outcome on performance of the project.

This paper intends to look at the key components of community projects planning/initiation Vis a Vis the outcomes in terms of performance of the projects. It will further give an overhaul analysis of how and why many projects end up collapsing after being handed over by either donors or government due to poor initiation as observed by many scholars.

2.0 Theoretical framework

This study is guided by several theories which attempt to explain how project Planning and initiation affects the performance of a Community project. These theories include the Systems Theory (Bertalanffy 1968), Stakeholder Theory (Freeman 1984), Contingency Theory (Lawrence and Lorsh 1967), Financial Distress Theory and Theory of Constraint.

Ackoff (1969) defines a System as an entity conceptual or physical that consists of interdependent parts. Each of the elements of the system is connected to every other element, directly or indirectly and no subject of elements is unrelated to any other subject. The fundamental issue of Systems theory is relationships, not only between parts of the system but also within the parts themselves. Tamas *et al* (2000) observed that System Theory provides an analytical framework which can be used to describe some of the many factors involved in community development projects. Some of the key concerns in community development projects, such as assessing power and influence, understanding the dynamics of inter-group relationships, and considering the changes involved in planning community project activities, can be understood and described using System Theory. Terms such as systems and sub-systems, closed and open systems, system boundaries, the transfer of energy or influence across boundaries, feedback and system balance (or homeostasis) can be used to clarify what sometimes seems to be a bewildering array of information involved in community development project work. In the system, issues of boundaries whether physical or imaginary are also present.

"Homeostasis" is a term which is used to describe a condition inside a system. It is a "steady state" or a "dynamic balance" which occurs within a system when its internal and external conditions stay essentially the same from one day to the next. The concept of homeostasis thus includes reference to the passage of time: a system will progress through time in a state of balance if it can continue to gain access to the resources it needs to keep itself in that condition. If there is a desire to make a change in a system there is a need to alter its "steady state" by modifying some of the conditions in that system. Anything which alters the energy flow within or between parts of a system will bring about changes. For example, a community which has high levels of disunity and backbiting among sub-groups can be changed by giving influential members of each sub-group an important task to do which requires them to collaborate with their counterparts in other sub-groups. Working on this common task might change attitudes and the type of communication between groups and foster a system-wide shift from conflict to cooperation.

This theory is relevant for this study since planning of Community projects involves complex systems being put together, different stakeholders coming on board to give diverse views, setting objectives, giving roles,

allocating resources, budgeting and drawing a work plan among other responsibilities. For the success agreement of the specific Community project to be undertaken, there must be concurrent agreement of the identified Community project, project team members and agreed roles among all the stakeholders. Failure by one group (whether it is the community, the donor, government or opinion leaders), the community project is deemed to fail achieving its goals or on performance.

Another theory that guided this study is the Stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory is a theory of organizational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organization. It identifies and models the groups which are stakeholders of a project, and both describes and recommends methods by which management can give due regard to the interests of those groups. The theory attempts to address the "Principle of Who or What Really Counts (Freeman, 1984). The stakeholder view of strategy is an instrumental theory of the Community development projects, integrating both the resource-based view as well as the market-based view, and adding a sociopolitical level. This view of the firm is used to define the specific stakeholders of a Community project, of stakeholder identification as well as examine the conditions under which these parties should be treated as stakeholders (Gaertner 2010).

Stakeholder theory seems to promote a more cooperative, caring type of relationship. Community Organizers should seek to make decisions that satisfy stakeholders, leading to situations where all parties involved in a relationship gain. Community organizers work with numerous stakeholders in different instances. All stakeholders should be addressed in some way so that all stakeholders or a majority of them will be happy with an outcome. When a donor or government wants to fund or initiate a Community project, opinion leaders, members of the community, as well as the direct beneficiaries of the project should be fully involved in terms of gathering views, planning, initiating and execution of the project up to completion. In the planning phase, stakeholders form the crucial bit since their views and opinions will define the angle and direction the project is going to take in terms of if the objectives will be met, if the performance and success of the project will be as conceived in the initial stages or if the project is bound to fail. Stakeholder theory should force project donor, project team and government to examine the effect of their decisions on others and make the best decision possible for all people involved.

This theory is applicable for this study since community projects that do not have a component of community involvement or in other words stakeholders' involvement especially in the critical phase of planning fail and end up not achieving the goals that pre-determined their formation. When developing a community project, it is important that the planners know who the main stakeholders are. In order to create positive change within a community, it is important to consider that the most important stakeholder, are the people who live in that community. Too often, community developers think of others' interests before they think of the residents of city that they are working in.

The other theory that guided this study is the Contingency theory. Burns and Stalker (1961) asserts that contingency theory belongs to a class of behavioral theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. Scott (1981) adds contingency theory to the statement that: "the best way to organize depends on the nature of the environment to which the organization must relate". This is complemented by the works of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), Thompson (1967) who were interested in the impact of contingency factors on organizational structure. Perrow (1967) further examined the interaction between environmental uncertainty, organization structure and various aspects of performance.

It has been noted by Morgan (2007) that organizations are open systems which need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and to adopt to environmental circumstances and that there is no one best way of organizing. The appropriate form depends on the kind of task and environment one is dealing with. Fry and Smith (1987) argue that contingency theory tries to identify situational variables that affect managerial actions and organizational performance.

The other theory that befits this study is the financial distress theory. It is characterized by decline in the firm's performance, value and failure (Opler and Titman, 1994). Organizations with projects that are supposed to yield profits have to ensure their projects perform as per expectations. Projects for profits should first recoup the initial capital invested then yield profits. This theory is important when addressing financial challenges affecting the successful performance of organizations. The CBOs financial management practices have a gap as they do not operate within budgets and have weak internal controls; they do not follow their financial policies and audit their accounts (Mwaura 2014). The major challenge of this theory is it cannot recognize symptoms of failure early enough during project planning or initiation in order to make corrections. This theory focuses on the performance of Community projects which leads to the second research objective which focuses on the competence of project team on towards successful performance of Community projects. This theory will therefore guide in the understanding of the important role that project teams play especially on financial management matters towards success of a Community project.

The theory of constraints is a management philosophy that is geared towards helping organizations

continually to achieve their goals. The theory of constraints was developed by Goldratt in 1997 and according to him, in any systematic chain of operations there is always one operation that constraints or limits throughput of the entire chain. The underlying premise of the theory is that organizations can be measured and controlled by variations on the three measures; throughput, operational expense and inventory. Theory of Constraints is based on the premise that the rate of goal achievement by a goal-oriented system (i. e the system's throughput) is limited by at least one constraint. A constraint is anything that prevents the system from achieving more of its goal (Nyang'ori 2012). Constraints can be internal or external to the system. In community projects, typical project constraints include: people: lack of skilled people limits the system, Financial Resources: If not properly utilized, then the project's goal are likely not to be achieved.

Critical chain project management (CCPM) is a method of planning and managing project execution designed to deal with uncertainties inherent in managing projects, while taking into consideration limited availability of resources (physical, human skills and management and support capacity) needed to execute projects. CCPM is an application of the theory of constraints to projects. The goal is to increase the flow of projects in an organization throughput.

3.0 Analysis and Discussion of Literature

In this paper, "participation" is defined as a process where individuals, groups, and organizations choose to take an active role in making decisions that affect them (Wilcox, 2003). The use of the term also reflects World Bank's definition, which describes it as "a process through which stakeholders' influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them" (World Bank, 1996,). Chikati (2009) defines planning as a communication process where people with different views and ideas share on how a desired situation should look like and how they are likely to get there and how to express these ideas together and reach a consensus. The focus here is how planning of a community project enhances the success of the project. Stakeholder participation or inclusion in the planning process will definitely yield positive results of the project. Hence, we will be investigating the relationship between community participation in project planning and project outcomes.

Caldwel et al (2016) in their study on Stakeholder Approach to Community participation in a Rural Development Project asserts that Stakeholder participation in organizational or project management is always considered from two main perspectives. First, from a normative perspective, stakeholder participation is regarded as an ethical issue (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Samuels, Greenfield, & Piper, 1996), as it takes into consideration the legitimate interests of the identified stakeholders, necessitating a stakeholder-oriented operational framework policy (planning) in the organization. The normative perspective provides an ethical and moral framework that reflects not only economic imperatives but also the human centered values of the organization in its goals Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2011).

Second, and in contrast, is the instrumental perspective, which investigates how stakeholder participation in planning can be used to achieve the performance objectives of an organization. The instrumental perspective seeks to find out how stakeholders can be used as a tool in strategic decision making to achieve predetermined objectives. For instance, Berman *et al* (1999) state that a strategic management model requires an organization to address the concerns of their stakeholders, as doing so will boost the organization's financial performance. This perspective involves the personalization of the organization's relationships with its stakeholders and in this case the community, the particularization of each stakeholder's interests, and the raising of managerial awareness of organizational decisions, processes, and policies to achieve the organization's objectives (Kretzmann et al 2005).

Caldwel (2016) adds that in a participatory development project, stakeholders should be identified and brought in as partners "to explore more widely the anticipated development challenge as perceived by different stakeholders". This will provide a platform to articulate the relationship model required in the decision-making (during planning) mechanism to achieve the stated goals (Freeman, Wicks, & Parman, 2004). Similarly, the identification of the stakeholders is done early in a project to understand key stakeholders' "positions and perceptions about the proposed change" (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009,). Above all, the involvement of the community and other stakeholders' makes it possible to seek their views and identify how can contribute to meeting the identified challenges.

A study conducted by Barasa and Jelagat (2013) on building the foundation for sustainable development suggests that needs identification is an important stage in development at the grassroots level. Community development starts with the identification of a need or the realization that there is a need. This identification and sharing of the vision elicit a commitment from the people to continue with the process of community development to become a reality. They further argue that this process is followed by group discussions and analysis. Such discussion is aimed at understanding the problem, how it affects them and to what extent. The shared understanding provides a solid foundation for identifying the problem and trying to find ways of solving it. It also helps in clarifying the problem at hand and the resources available. Mulwa (2008) adds that

the community is able to help in setting objectives, goals and how the intended project will proceed. Barasa and Jelagat (2013) in their work found out that for there to be any meaningful community project development, there must be participation by stakeholders and beneficiaries in planning.

They must understand their needs, be able to prioritize and rank them according to the severity of the needs, they must understand how the problem affects them including their causes and effects. Additionally, they must be involved in assessing available options for them given their resource base. Participatory needs identification by community members is important because once they collectively conceive a problem and prioritize it they then move it to the stage of appreciating its extent and legitimizing the process of solving it. If the community does not participate in needs identification, even if the need is identified with the help of the outsiders, they will not legitimize it. This leads to greater chances of stalling during implementation stage and even at the usage stage. Chikati (2009) asserts that Planning is a communication process where people with different views and ideas share on how a desired situation should look like and how they are likely to get there and how to express these ideas together and reach a consensus. Further, through communication, people can achieve the commitment necessary to sustain the decision taken by them. Planning therefore implies control of the process. Mulwa (2008) observes that for effective development to be realized, the community, which is the major beneficiary of the project, must be involved by use of project implementation committees to coordinate project planning and other aspects such as budgeting, resource identification, resource leveling, procurement and allocation.

Participation in projects by members of the community has major advantages. It allows people to build their capacities and identify and own the project. This leads to efficiency and sustainability. Fu (2013) came up with reasons he considers vital to why participation of communities in a programme. He states that participation ensures efficient utilization of resources, where people work together towards achieving their objectives. Secondly, participation increases effectiveness where projects are able to be completed within set time frame and still be of standard value as per the set goals. Participation also increases effectiveness by granting them a say in deciding the objectives and strategies in the project. It also reduces dependency as it increase self-reliance where the community stops looking at the government to solve some of their problems since they are able to do it themselves.

A study on Planning and Managing of Development Projects in Bangladesh: Future for Government and Private Organizations by Hamiduzzaman (2012), established that corruption in the form of mismanagement of resources was the main source of evil leading to poor performance of community projects. He further observed that at local level, planning people participation was not accelerated because of their unconsciousness and power of the local elite. Urban based planning is given more importance than rural planning. The study failed to identify other variables that results in a failed project planning. The results were rather general and simplistic and may not be very useful in improving participation and project planning process for successful performance of a community project.

Kennedy (2016) argues that measuring of success by numbers- the number of houses built, clients served, jobs created number of people rising from poverty- measures important outcomes, but outcomes insufficient for community development in the sense that the goals of the project are likely to be met, while the community remains under-developed. He considers a well performed/ successful project to be: one that does include products of development, but which rests primarily on power and control being vested in community members. Success should be measured by the number of people who have, in the planning process, moved from being an object of planning to being a subject, and lastly, success should be measured in terms of the ability of people involved in the planning process to replicate their achievements in other situations. He used secondary data in the study. This study will rely more on primary data sources including interviews and questionnaires. The researcher is in agreement with Kennedy's findings, however, he will go further to examine project success in terms of performance, sustainability, community participation and other stakeholders involvement, rather than focusing on the findings of Kennedy (2016) alone.

In their work titled *Factors affecting performance of community based organizations projects in kisii county Kenya*, Mwaura and Ngugi (2014) used questionnaires to gather data and analyzed using SPSS software. Their study revealed that a good project team, that manages its financials well, has developed good internal financial control and observes set process is likely to make the Community project successful in performance. This findings are in agreement with Kihoro and Waiganjo (2015) who studied Factors affecting performance of projects in the construction industry in Kenya. They also used questionnaires with semi structured questions to gather data and their findings reveal that even in the construction industry, the project team determines the success or failure of the project. Matters of financial management, costs, time and decision making that are handled by the project team will determine the duration of completion, the quality of the project and even the cost implications. This study will adopt a descriptive study design, use questionnaires and analyze using SPSS to ascertain if the findings by the above researchers are still valid and furthermore, it will provide insightful information on the specific financial internal controls that have been adopted to ensure performance of

community projects are a success.

A study conducted by Njogu (2014) Community participation on successful performance of water projects in Kerwa Sub-Location showed that where budgets are not prepared and followed, chances of misappropriation, misallocation and over expenditure of finances become quite high. He noted that without a budget, it is not possible to plan how money collected will be used. He further observed that absence of a budget makes it difficult to know who should account for what expenditures. Community participation in budgeting process strengthens and broadens partnerships and also creates spaces for mutual learning. Baiocchi (2005) illustrated that participatory budgeting process produce actual welfare effects by improving the effectiveness of public investments, emphasizing a pro-poor orientation and reducing possibilities for „pork-barrel politics“ and other forms of clientelistic policy-making processes. He used ordinal scale in his analysis. However, his results are quite shallow as they do not conclusively relate the variables of project teams and the outcomes or performance of a Project.

Conclusion

Community Project Planning is a core stage of any development project. It is evident in the literature discussed that many aspects have to be looked at including community participation, resources available, skills required and the sustainability of the project in the long term. This are the main factors that determine the success or failure of the Community project. It is thus important to study the planning process, the activities involved and the groups involved in the process and link it to the final performance of the Community project. The study recommends that governments and other development partners to take a critical look and include communities in all the Community development projects that they intend to do, this will increase ownership attitudes and reduce conflicts, and misappropriation of the resources budgeted for, uplift the living standards of the community as well as the general development of the area.

REFERENCES

- Atakpa M, (2013) *A Review of the Project Cycle and Project Implementation at the Third Tier Level of Government in Nigeria: A Theoretical Reflection*. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Published by MCSER-CEMAS-Sapienza University of Rome
- Barasa F, and Jelagat T, (2013) *Community Participation in project planning, Management and Implementation: Building the Foundation for Sustainable Development*. International Journal of Current Research Vol 5
- Baiocchi, G, (2005). *Militants and citizens- the politics of participatory democracy* in Porto Alegre, Stanford, Stanford University press.
- Bertalanffy, von, L. (1968). *General systems theory*. New York: Braziller.
- Berman, S., Wicks, A., Kotha, S., & Jones, T. (1999). *Does stakeholder orientation matter? The relationship between stakeholder management models and firm financial performance*. *Academy of Management Journal*, 42, 488-506.
- Caldwell, M and Usadolo, S (2016) *A Stakeholder Approach to Community Participation in a Rural Development Project*. An article distributed by the Creative Commons Attribution.
- Chikati J, (2009). *Participatory Project Identification and Planning, A Regional Partnership for Resource Development publication*, Signal Press Ltd, IFDM Gardens
- Donaldson, T., & Preston, L. E. (1995). The stakeholder theory of the corporation: Concepts, evidence and implications. *Academy of Management Review*
- Freeman, R. Edward (1984). *Strategic Management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman. ISBN 0-273-01913-9.
- Freeman, R. E, Wicks, A. C., & Parman, B. (2004). Stakeholder theory and “the corporate objective revisited.” *Organizational Science*, 15, 363-369.
- Fu X (2013) *Planning for drought-resilient communities: evaluating the fastest growing counties' local comprehensive plans*. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/arch_crp_theses/23
- Gaertner J.(2010) *Community Development Theories* Thinking critically about community development. <http://communitydevtheories.blogspot.co.ke/2010/10/stakeholder-theory.html>
- Hamiduzzaman M, (2012) *Planning and Managing of Development Projects in Bangladesh: Future Challenges for Government and Private Organizations*. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*. www.academicjournal.org/JPARP
- Javed M, Ahmad K and Suziah B. (2012) *Project Variables in Performance of the Project Planning, Implementation and Controlling Processes*. *International Journal of Engineering and Innovative Technology (IJEIT)* Volume 1, Issue 3, March 2012
- Kennedy M, (2016) *Transformative Community Planning: Empowerment through Community Development*. <http://www.plannersnetwork/magazine-publications/case-studies>
- Kretzmann, Mcnigh, Dobrowolski and Puntenney (2005) *Community Involvement in Program*

- Planning. www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2009/apr
- Mainardes, E. W., Alves, H., & Raposo, M. (2011). Stakeholder theory: Issues to resolve. *Management Decision*, 49, 226-252.
- Mwaura M, and Ngugi, K (2014) *Factors affecting performance of community based organizations projects in Kisii County Kenya*. International Journal of Social Sciences Management and Entrepreneurship 1(2):51-67, August 2014. www.sagepublishers.org
- Mulwa F,(2008) *Managing Community- Based Development: Unmasking the Mastery of Participatory Development*, PREMESE Olivex Publishers, Nairobi
- Njogu D. K, (2014) *Influence of community participation on performance of constituency development funded rural borehole water projects: a case of Kerwa sub-location, Kiambu county, Kenya*
- Nyamasege E, and Mburu D, (2015) *effects of project life cycle management on performance of water development projects in kenya*. International Journal of Mechanical and Civil Engineering ISSN: 2456-1479
- Odoyo C, (2013) *Factors Affecting Implementation of Community Projects: Case of Kimira – Oluch Smallholder Farm Improvement Project in Homa Bay County, Kenya*. Universal Journal of Management 1(2): 111-118, 2013. <http://www.hrpub.org>
- Samuels, J. M., Greenfield, S., & Piper, A. (1996). The role of non-executive directors post-cadbury. *Journal of General Management*, 21(4), 1-14.
- Tamas A, Yukon W, and Ontario A (2000) *System theory in community development San Francisco*: Jossey-Bass
- Tufte, T., & Mefalopulos, P. (2009). *Participatory communication: A practical guide*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Wendell (2010) *Project Planning and Control When Time Matters: Focus on Process to Synchronize and Drive Results*. Principal Consultant, ProChain Solutions, Inc., 3460 Commission Ct., Ste. 301, Lake Ridge, VA 22192, wsimpson@prochain.com