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Availability of Financial Resources and Sustainability of Projects by Community Based Organizations in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

There has been a lot debate on the sustainability of projects initiated by Community Based Organizations. The principal objective of this article was therefore, to empirically assess the influence of availability of financial resources on sustainability of projects by Community Based Organizations (CBOs). A sample population of 112 comprising officials of community developments projects out of a target population 502 respondents was taken. Respondents comprised of County officials, community leaders, project leaders and managers. This study adopted a cross sectional research design and sampling was done using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire was made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25.0). Descriptive and Regression analysis was conducted on the data. It is recommended that the community-based projects should hold capacity building sessions for the members and the committee members so as to equip them with appropriate knowledge concerning the designing and development of community based organizational projects. Also, it was recommended that the committee members should be accountable and transparent to the project members to maintain the good will of the members to continuously participate in the provision of implementation resources.

Key words: Kenya, Meru County, Financial Resources, Sustainability, Projects, Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

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1.0 Introduction

Billions of shillings have been spent in communities to enhance the living situation of the people. Aid effectiveness is a growing concern for the donor community. In the recent past, development practitioners have been focusing on efficient aid delivery. The shift from project mode to Sector Wide Approaches, Structural Adjustment measures to Poverty Reduction Strategy, Programmes-based Approaches, Direct Budget Support, Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks reflect this concern for reducing the fragmentation of development systems and change the way aid is delivered by shifting the balance of power (Adhiambo, 2012). While donor funding can act as a temporary driver for social change, maintaining the social change is challenging. For instance, unforeseen circumstances may threaten the initial uptake of innovative project design elements. Short funding cycles, conflict with time needed to stimulate social change; and potentially worthwhile healthy interventions may no longer be financially viable once donor funding ends.

Sustainability is reflected in the capacity of the community to cope with change and adapt to new situations. A project that is seen as worth sustaining today may not be so in future. Notwithstanding, substantial resources have been allocated to developing and maintaining community-based programs for children, youth and families. Relatively little is known about how these programs are sustained and what factors lead to their failure. Quite often, the typical community-based program has a relatively short life once its original funding base expires (Susan, & Guy, 2010). Inadequate information and understanding of what sustains community based programs has led to various researches focusing on how community projects can be sustained past their initial funding base and increase their longevity in addressing the needs of the community

In Meru County, one of the main challenges in community-based projects is implementation using the available funds and resources especially on community owned projects. Community projects implemented through funds from Harambee spirit depreciate and, in most cases end up collapsing. The communities are not able to meet the cost of replacing or repair resulting in abandonment and reduced access to safe community development trust fund, which implies a reverse in the gains made. Owing to under investment and poor operations and maintenance against increased demand for the community development trust fund services there is a worrying trend of deteriorating service and status of facilities. This calls for diversified means of resource mobilization to enhance sustainability of existing projects in the rural community as well as implement new projects that will benefit community at large.

Statement of the Problem

Projects sustainability does not just happen therefore it needs all kind of input for it to run well. CBPs consistently use social impact assessments and in country situation evaluations as a means to advocate for citizens and minority groups, to fund projects aimed at improving the standard of living for the communities in which they work. However, CBPs not having the

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money and standing as the governments that they oppose, they must rely on generous donors to fund such assessment which is an enterprise which can be filled with pitfalls and ethical dilemmas. Ethical dilemmas between donors and CBPs implementing programs as desired and needed versus fulfilling donor requests are evident. Ethical conflicts and concerns have been raised (Mwaura, & Ngugi, 2014). In Meru County, most of the community-based projects initiated by both national and county government have not been effectively sustained.

Most of the projects have not served the intended purpose because they don't get to pick up and operate as envisioned and experience lots of challenges that linked to as a result of lack of ownership of project ideas by other members, Poor project appraisals and dependence on support and hence forsake sustainability aspect. These challenges are anticipated to have led to failure of most of the projects in the county (Oino, Towett, Kirui & Luvega, 2015). This has been attributed to inadequate funds, limited community participation and lack of close monitoring to mitigate emanating challenges. The donors and facilitators in order to elevate the people out of poverty or offer alternative social amenities apart from what is being offered by the government, have opted to channel the resources through community-based organizations as they are at the centre of people's needs. Nevertheless, the operation of such projects in most cases has been left into the hands of the community members for them to take over the running in a way to suit their needs caused by mismanagement.

1.0 Literature Review

There are many definitions of sustainability and even more interpretations of its meaning. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Strategic Framework (Conway & Barbier, 2013) defines project sustainability as the ability to ensure that the institutions supported through projects and the benefits realized are maintained and continue after the end of the project's external funding. Sustainability has also been defined as the ability of a development project to maintain or expand a flow of benefits at a specified level for a long period after project inputs have ceased. A project is sustainable if the community/beneficiaries are capable on their own without the assistance of outside development partners, to continue producing results for their benefit for as long as their problem still exists (Luvenga et al., 2015).

Project sustainability is the capacity to maintain services and benefits both at the community and institution levels without detrimental effects even after special assistance such as financial, technical, managerial has been phased out. It is the probability that a project shall continue long after the outside support is withdrawn. It is critical to the success of community based projects that various elements of sustainability be considered throughout each stage of the project lifecycle. This is particularly true where outside involvement is discontinued after project closure, as is the case for many development projects.

A number of considerations have been identified as critical to achieving sustainability in community based projects. Luvenga et al. (2015) identify community participation, project results and external assistance as the most important elements. There are four elements of sustainability which need to be recognized and analyzed. They include: Community Influence, which measures the impact a community makes upon the project in terms of the social contract and stakeholder influence; Environmental Impact, which is the impact of the project on its geophysics environment; Organizational Culture, which is the relationships between the project's internal stakeholders; and Finances, an adequate return for the level of risk undertaken in pursuit of sustainable development and financial sustainability. United

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Nations (UN) designates three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental further subdivide the social pillar into three components: socio-cultural respect, community participation, and political cohesion.

Financial resource is the most critical in the sustainability of a project. Bakalian and Wakeman (2009) observed that for efficacious operation and maintenance of community projects, it is paramount that financial management be in the hands of community members. Community participation in resource mobilization process strengthens and broadens partnerships with the local community/ stakeholders and also creates spaces for mutual learning. Bhavesh, (2016) illustrated that participatory resource mobilization process produces actual welfare effects by improving the effectiveness of project performance, emphasizing a pro-poor orientation and reducing possibilities for failure. Transparency is a vital ingredient for building trust and maintaining the commitment of individual members of community projects (Ville & Wicken, 2012).

When the beneficiaries actively participate in financial management of community projects, the management committees incline to be more accountable and transparent in their operations. If a project does not have the resources it requires to implement a project plan it cannot be prosperous hence projects obtain these resources from both internal and external sources (stakeholders or community contribution). Resources are people, equipment and funds. Resource mobilization is a strategic process that is grounded in effective management of community based venture through open communication (Fabricius, Koch, Turner & Magome, 2013).

Allocating adequate time and resources for participatory analysis and responding to demand-led approaches are important ways to improve participation. An evaluation of Welthungerhilfe, an International NGO operating in Tana River County, Projects funded by GiZ and USAID recommendations (Zerhusen, 2012), indicate that; short-term projects cannot ensure sustainable capacity building of important organizational structures within target groups. The integration of poverty reduction measures (capacity building, improvement of water availability) into the emergency program has convinced and motivated the beneficiaries to participate actively in the programme execution and has engaged people in self-development efforts, which in turn raises ownership (Brooks, Waylen & Mulder, 2012). Insufficient financing is a major factor in poor maintenance which, in turn, is often cited as a reason for project failure (Hacker, Tendulkar & Di-Girolamo, 2012). Project benefits will not be produced without adequate resources; financial, human, natural, and technical to sustain them. Since development projects typically provide 26 financial, and often human and technical resources, benefits cannot continue post project unless resources have been transferred to or can be acquired by the appropriate host country organizations.

Natural resources are finite and must be used responsibly to ensure their continued availability for the development of future generations (Oregon, 2015). The other factor influencing development process is the resources of financing process, which includes raising and maintaining adequate funds for water supply structures which is a critical importance to sustainability. Insufficient financing is a major factor in poor maintenance which, in turn, is often cited as a reason for project failure (Hacker, Tendulkar & Di-Girolamo, 2012). The commitment of resources, particularly availability of financial resources, by beneficiary communities is seen as an important indicator of the expected value of the project to these communities.

When communities recover from costs or stabilize in raising funds for maintenance, this contributes to sustainability not only through increasing resources available for sustaining

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and expanding benefits. This is also coupled by responsibility and accountability (Hodgkin, 1994). Priority interventions, sometimes dependent on physical characteristics within the project area, such as length of pipeline or depth of drilling needed to reach potable water sources. These choices, in turn, determine capital requirements and recurrent financing needs. Capital costs are equipment, labour, and material costs associated with initial project activities, including any and all construction activity (Hodgkin, 2014). It is important that the beneficiary community have the capacity to generate the resources necessary to support the water supply interventions. 'In-kind' contributions can be valuable additions to a project, but cash is required for many items including equipment and fuel. Beneficiary contribution to capital costs, either labor or money, may be a significant indicator of system sustainability. Contributions are likely to indicate a sincere desire for the benefits which accrue from project interventions.

However, a willingness to contribute to capital expenditures, in cash or in-kind, does not of itself ensure sustainability (Hodgkin, 2014). Secure financing goes hand in hand with managing project costs and budget throughout the project's phases to ensure that expected results and benefits are yielded within the predetermined resource constraints. Many project funders tend to prefer financing short term specific issue projects since they have higher impact; Effective aid, however usually requires core unrestricted funding over a longer period in order to empower local institutional strengthening. Certainty in financing, sufficient funding both locally and from other health partners increases the probability that a health project will be successful. The successful projects are those that are able to lock in long-term commitments of financing (Seyfang, Hielscher, Hargreaves, Martiskainen, & Smith, 2014). Steady enough resources are requisite to enable sustainable programs that deliver the appropriate impact.

1.1 Theoretical Foundation

The Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) originated from Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik in the 1970s. RDT is underpinned by the idea that resources are key to organizational success and that access and control over resources is a basis of power. Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) is based upon how the external resources of organizations affect their behavior. Organizations are dependent on resources that ultimately originate from the environment which contains other organizations. This is true when applied to the sustainability of community water borehole projects. Sustainability depends not only on availability of financial resources but also on human resources' training, skills and knowledge in the maintenance of water facilities or infrastructure. Resources one organization needs are often in the hands of other organizations.

Resources are a basis of power and legally independent organizations are interdependent (Chapman et al. 2011). The composition, influence, knowledge, motivations and actions of stakeholders are dynamic in any given place, time and are inherently uncertain (Shikuku, 2012). The theory helped in understanding financial resources that are most critical in the sustainability of a project. Resource Dependence needs a closer examination as its weakness lies in its very assertions of dependence. With changing trends of financial uncertainties, there is need to lean towards other theories of uncertainties. According to this theory, organization depends on resources for their survival; therefore, for any organization to achieve sustainability, resources are indispensable.

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2.0 Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was undertaken in this study. This design was suitable for this study because data was collected from projects at one point in time. Stratified and simple random sampling technique was used. The target population for this study was 502 people comprising all stakeholders of community based organizational projects in Meru County. A sample population of 112 respondents was arrived at using formula as shown below:

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

Where n = sample size

N = Population (502)

Cv = coefficient of variation (take 0.6)

e = tolerance of desired level of confidence (take 0.05) at 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{502 (0.6^2)}{0.6^2 + (502-1) 0.05^2} = 111.90 (\text{rounded to } 112)$$

Stratified sampling was used to group the target population into categories or strata. From each category, representative samples were drawn through simple random methods. This method ensured that all the individuals in the target population had an equal chance of being included in the sample. This helped to eliminate the biasness.

Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire was made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. The open-ended questions were used so as to encourage the respondent to give an in-depth and felt response without feeling held back in illuminating of any information and the closed ended questions allowed respondents to respond from limited options that had been stated. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25.0). Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in data analysis.

3.0 Findings and Discussions

This section displays findings and discussions of the study.

4.1 Response Rate

Questionnaires were administered to a sample of 112 out of which 110 were filled and returned. This represented a response rate of 98.6%. This response rate was a good since it conformed to Ott and Longnecker (2015) and Malhotra (2015) stipulation that a response rate above 50 percent is adequate for analysis. The results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response Rate	Number of informants	Percent
Response	110	98.6
Non- Response	2	1.4
Total	112	100.0

Source: Field Data

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4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.3 Sustainability of Community Based Organizational Projects

The study sought to establish aspects of sustainability of community based organizational projects. The study used a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, where 1 represented greatly decreased (GD), 2 was decreased (D), 3 was constant (C), 4 was improved (I) while 5 was greatly improved (GD). The results are displayed in Table 2:

Table 2: Sustainability of Projects by Community Based Organizations

	GD (%)	D (%)	C (%)	I (%)	GI (%)	Mea n	Std. Dev.
Capacity to carry out its operations that sustain all aspects of the project management cycle.	14.5	16.4	10.9	16.4	41.8	3.55	1.518
Financial Sustainability	11.8	13.6	12.7	15.5	46.4	3.71	1.461
Environmental sustainability	10	5.5	10	13.6	60.9	4.10	1.354
Social sustainability	8.2	8.2	14.5	20.9	48.2	3.93	1.304

Source: Field data

From the findings in Table 2, majority of the respondents indicated that environmental sustainability as shown by 60.9% had greatly improved for the last five years. Further, most of the respondents indicated that social sustainability as shown 48.2%, financial sustainability as shown by 46.4% and the capacity to carry out its operations that sustain all aspects of the project management cycle as shown by 41.8% had greatly improved for the last five years. This implies that environmental sustainability was the most improved over the last five years.

4.3 Availability of Financial Resources

The study also sought the respondents' level of agreement with statements linked to availability of financial resources using 1 to 5 Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. The results were as shown in Table 3.

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Table 3: Availability of Financial Resources

	SD (%))	D (%))	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
There is adequate allocation of funds for the projects	7.3	7.3	8.2	48.3	29.0	4.04	1.234
The availability of financial resources is enhanced by financial planning	7.3	10	5.5	49.1	28.2	4.02	1.271
The increased number of donors/partners have the available financial resources.	5.5	9.1	8.2	29.1	48.2	4.05	1.195
Availability of Financial Resources is enhanced by budgeting	7.3	9.1	12.7	48	22.9	3.95	1.281
Regular financial control and monitoring increases the availability of financial resources.	7.3	5.5	2.7	30.9	53.6	4.18	1.190

Source: Field data

From the findings in Table 3, it was evident that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that: regular financial control and monitoring increases the availability of financial resources as shown 53.6% and that the increased number of donors/partners have the available financial resources as shown by 48.2%. The respondents agreed that there was adequate allocation of funds for the projects as shown by 48.3% and that the availability of financial resources was enhanced by financial planning as shown by 49.1%. Most of the respondents agreed that availability of financial resources is enhanced by budgeting as shown by 48%. The findings imply that regular financial control and monitoring increases the availability of financial resources.

4.4 Inferential Statistics

The inferential statistics conducted in this study are Pearson's Correlation Analysis and regression analysis.

4.5 Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and the direction of the relationship between the sustainability of projects by Community Based Organizations and the availability of financial resources. The findings are shown in Table 4.

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Table 4: Correlation Matrix

		Sustainability of CBO projects
Sustainability of CBO projects	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
Availability of financial resources	Pearson Correlation	.638
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029

Source: Field data

Pearson's correlations analysis was then conducted at 95% confidence. The findings in Table 4 indicate the correlation matrix between availability of financial resources and sustainability of CBO projects. The findings show that there was a positive and strong relationship between availability of financial resources and sustainability of CBO projects.

4.6 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted as to determine the relationship between availability of financial resources against the dependent variable sustainability of community based organizational projects in Meru County. The findings for model summary are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.874	0.765	0.753	1.401

Source: Field data

From the findings in Table 5 is a model fit which establishes how the model equation fits the data. The adjusted R² was used to establish the predictive power of the study model and it was found to be 0.753 implying that 75.3% of the variations in sustainability of community based organizational projects in Meru County are explained by changes in availability of financial resources.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.782	0.121		14.727	.000
Availability of financial resources	0.683	0.197	0.663	3.467	.000

Source: Field data

The regression equation obtained from this outcome was: -

$$Y = 1.782 + 0.663X_1$$

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From the findings, the study found that if all independent variables were held constant at zero, then the sustainability of community based organizational projects in Meru County is 1.782. Further, the coefficient for availability of financial resources is 0.683 which is significant since $p=0.000$ is less than 0.05, meaning that a unit change in availability of financial resources leads to 66.3% change in sustainability of community based organizational projects in Meru County. The variable was also significant since calculated (3.467) was greater than tabulated value of t (1.658).

The study found that availability of financial resources leads to a 0.793-unit change in sustainability of community based organizational projects. The availability of financial resources was also significant since calculated (3.467) was greater than tabulated value of t (1.658). The study found that regular financial control and monitoring increases the availability of financial resources and that the increased number of donors/partners had the available financial resources. The study also established that there was adequate allocation of funds for the projects and the availability of financial resources was enhanced by financial planning. The study further found that it was agreed that availability of financial resources was enhanced by budgeting.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study established that sustainability of community based organizational are significantly affected by the availability of financial resources in Meru County, Kenya. The study concludes that assurance of availability of continuous funding for the projects, transparency, accountability and faithfulness of members of funds management ensures that community based organizational projects are implemented well.

The study recommends that the project managers should formulate policies which will assist in funds management which is a critical function in all community-based projects since it influences successful implementation of the projects, projects leaders and development partners need to emphasize and undertake training on proper management of funds.

The study also recommends that the community based projects should hold capacity building sessions for the members and the committee members so as to equip them with appropriate knowledge concerning the designing and development of community based organizational projects. This will enable the members to make suitable contributions to the project design.

The study therefore recommends use of exploratory research design for future studies. This is because the exploratory research design is conducted about research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to or rely upon to predict an outcome. The focus is on gaining insights and familiarity for later investigation or undertaken when research problems are in a preliminary stage of investigation.

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