

The Impact of Community Members Engagement in Project Implementation and Success in Rwanda; A Case Study of Ejo Heza Project

Kalenzi Bosco¹, Dr. Patrick Mulyungi, (PhD)²

¹Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

²Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

Abstract: *Community engagement in the development projects has been applied in developing countries over the last two decades using a variety of approaches. Public participation in the planning and management of developmental projects is crucial to their lasting success. However, in some projects, communities have had little say in the whole process of project cycle from the assessment up to evaluation. Additionally, the success of the Ejo heza Project could not be possible unless Global communities Rwanda plays a significant role of engaging beneficiaries in the whole process. General objective is to assess the impact of community engagement on the project success, a case study of Ejo heza Project. The study used a descriptive research design. This research design is used to describe what is in existence in respect to conditions or variables that are found in a given situation. The total population on this study was 75 household members. Questionnaire and interview was used as data collection instruments. Beneficiaries are engaged, Community Engagement into project planning and project planning to evaluation contribute to the project implementation and success where ($R^2=0.953$). ANOVA results further show explains project sustainability. The sig value (0.000) less than the level significance (0.05). The study concludes that the beneficiaries were more engaged into mid-term evaluation and project visibility through idea sharing with other community members and local leaders compared to how they were engaged into design and implementation stages of the project. this study recommends the project staff and Global communities Rwanda to come up with other methods or strategies to engage the beneficiaries in the whole project phases equally in order to avoid bias among project beneficiaries.*

1. Introduction

Community engagement requires participation of community members in projects that address their issues (USA National Institute of Health, 2011). Meaningful community participation extends beyond physical involvement to include generation of ideas, contributions to decision making, and sharing of responsibility. According to Ted in his study entitled Involvement to engagement conducted in 2008, he found out that community engagement requires creating opportunities for youth, families, staff members, organizations and community members to be involved in planning, decision making and evaluation of the projects that meet their needs. The project success is only possible when the beneficiaries are engaged in all phases of the project. Unless the poor are given an opportunity to be involved and engaged in the development of interventions designed to improve their livelihood, they will continue to miss the benefits of any intervention (Ofuoku, 2011) and (Sonowabo, 2009)

Community engagement and participation has been perceived as a *sin qua non* to development and success of any other initiative. Contemporary development scholars have been advocating the inclusion of people's participation in development projects as they believe the avowed objectives of any project cannot be fully achieved unless people meaningfully engaged in it. (Stone, 1989), argues that people's participation in development projects may help bring effective social change rather than impose an external culture on a society. Similarly, referring to the experience of rural development programs, (Shrimpton, 1989) states that community engagement in the design and management of a

project greatly enhances the likelihood of project success due to improved goodness of fit and increased sustainability.

Though the project success is closely linked with the level of community engagement and participation, many reasons have been identified as being responsible for the relatively low engagement and involvement of beneficiaries in decision making during development initiatives. The factors were ranged from economic, political, professionalism, nature of the product or service and even to the fact that centralization of power still remains a dominant orientation of many regimes in Africa. Under this condition, it becomes very difficult for any meaningful engagement to occur within the framework of development (Akinbile, Oladoja, Awoniyi, & Adisa, 2006) and (Ofuoku, 2011).

The most popular and widely adopted strategy for ensuring the engagement of people in local development is identified as decentralization. Rwanda was classified to have an impressive economic growth and progressive rate of social economic transformation. This growth was not attributed to just one single factor but too many factors across social and economic life of Rwandans, which resulted from their engagement and participation in the decision making processes (UNDP, 2015). In Rwanda, community engagement and participation has become a major policy concern, where every Rwandan is encouraged to participate in their country development including that project that directly contribute to the livelihood of its citizens.

Many international organizations have significantly contributed to the development of the country, including The Salvation Army International. Since, it started its interventions, The Salvation Army International has

Volume 7 Issue 10, October 2018

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

designed different project that impacted a number of beneficiaries through engagement and participation. Ejo heza Project was identified as one among different projects implemented by Global communities in Rwanda. The project aim to empower the community and to stimulate their financial intellectual and financial capacity to improve the economic stability for them and their families, as well as the whole community. However, the level of engaging beneficiaries remains low in the most of the development project funded by NGOs and government of some countries. The reason behind is that projects are conceived and designed by international NGOs and government of different countries, while few projects are conceived by rural people to satisfy their felt needs. Since the paradigm shift from top-down to bottom-up approach to development, here in Rwanda, researchers have not carried out in the study to assess the impact of Community engagement on the project success. Meanwhile, Ejo heza Project was identified to be necessary in the women and men development by empowering them with financial literacy skills and facilitate them to have access to micro finance as investment to their Income Generating Activities (IGAs). The result of the study will serve as a guide to policy formulation in order to execute sustainable projects through engaging community in the project life cycle from the assessment to evaluation for Global communities and its donors. Without the engagement of the community in the whole phase of the project cycle, it is remarkable that success of the Ejo heza project would be overpowered.

2. Statement of the Problem

Community engagement in the development projects has been applied in developing countries over the last two decades using a variety of approaches. Some success has been reported from the use of these approaches (Twebaze, 2010). According to Alfred in his study on interventions addressing poverty in Rwanda conducted in 2010, he concluded the finding saying that, the objective aiming at reducing poverty and improving the living standards of Rwandans set in its Vision 2020 and Economic Development and Poverty Reduction (EDPRS) I&II cannot be achieved without fully active participation of community in all projects that are designed to serve them. This factor is very important since provides a sense of ownership and be responsible for their sustainability of those executed projects.

The objective of the Ejo heza Project was to empower the women and men to stimulate their financial intellectual and financial capacity to improve the economic stability for them and their families, as well as the whole community. This objective should be realized through a process of empowerment which gives the targeted beneficiaries to control over their lives and increases their ability to own the project interventions. In this endeavor, (Thwala, 2010) asserts that public participation in the planning and management of developmental projects is crucial to their lasting success. However, in some projects, communities have had little say in the whole process of project cycle from the assessment up to evaluation. Additionally, the success of the Ejo heza Project could not be possible unless Global

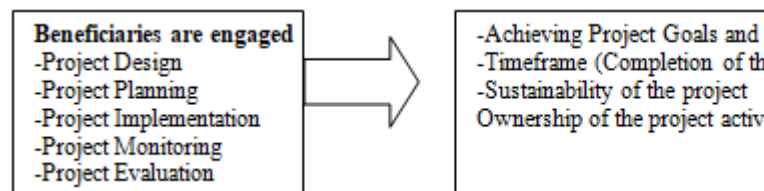
communities Rwanda plays a significant role of engaging beneficiaries in the whole process.

Without detailed assessments, it is not possible to state if low community engagement in the project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation can be related to poor sustainability of the project in the study area. Notwithstanding the important findings of different authors, past study neither of the above-mentioned studies empirically tested the effect of community engagement on the project success here in Rwanda. It is against this backdrop that this study is set to address the following objectives; to what extent the community can be engaged in the success of the project and also to know the role of community engagement in the success of the project.

3. Objective of the Study

To determine the influence of beneficiaries on project implementation and success in Rwanda.

4. Conceptual Framework



5. Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design. (Burns & Grove, 2001), states that, descriptive research design is a type of research method that is used when one wants to get information on the current status of a person or an object. It is used to describe what is in existence in respect to conditions or variables that are found in a given situation. Whereas descriptive research does not fit neatly into the definition of either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies, it can utilize elements of both, often within the same study.

6. Target Population

Beneficiaries are the main primary data sources in this study. To this end, 75 household members served by the project in Kayonza district were considered as target population under this study since the project targeted to reach that number since its initiation.

7. Sampling Techniques

To ensure the appropriateness of the study, the researcher used convenience sampling technique to select the participants of the study. According to (Kenneth, 1987), convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling, which involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population which is close to hand. The respondents were interviewed on the basis of who were available just after ascertaining that she or he has been a beneficiary of the project.

8. Research Findings and Discussion

Table 1: The statement on beneficiaries' engagement on project phases

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beneficiaries were engaged into project design process	3.59	1.128
Beneficiaries were actively involved in the project need assessment	3.81	0.982
Beneficiaries have been part of the people who decided where to locate the project activities	3.66	0.91
Beneficiaries participated in the implementation of EJO Heza project	3.88	0.734
Monitoring and evaluation process was a collective responsibility that has involved all stakeholders including beneficiaries	3.92	0.514
Beneficiaries were engaged into mid-year and final evaluation of EJO Heza project activities	4.00	0.593
Beneficiaries were able to share project ideas with other community members and local leaders	4.28	0.583
Average	3.88	0.778

Source: Researcher primary data 2018.

From the findings in table 1, the researcher realized that with the mean and standard deviation that ranges between 3.59 to 4.28 and 0.514 to 1.128 respectively, the findings reveals that the higher number of the members of EJO Heza project who were interviewed did strongly agree that, they were engaged into different project life cycle phases. In average all beneficiaries were involved in the project life cycle phases.

However, the respondents strongly agreed that they were more engaged in project mid-term and final evaluation for better measuring the project achievement outcomes and targets, and beneficiaries were able to share project ideas including evaluation findings and success stories with other community members and local leadership as expressed by the mean score of 4.00 and 4.28 respectively. They were also agreed on the fact that they were engaged into EJO Heza project design process and they were able to participate into project planning sessions and their ideas were considered during the implementation stage as shown by the mean score of 3.59 and 3.76 and a heterogeneous standard deviation of 1.128 and 1.038 respectively. Secondary, the beneficiaries agreed to the fully participation into the implementation stage of EJO Heza project as expressed by the mean score of 3.88 and a heterogeneous standard deviation of 0.734. Recent research as surveyed by (Jean Marie Vianney, 2013), shows that project sustainability and success requires the fully participation of beneficiaries and local leaders. Initially, when beneficiaries are involved in the implementation of project activities, they understand the project activities easily and contribute significantly to its achievement as they owned the project interventions which can lead to success and failure in the other hand if they are not fully engaged.

The respondents agreed that, the monitoring and evaluation process was a collective responsibility that involved different stakeholders including the beneficiaries as expressed by the mean score of 3.92 and a heterogeneous of standard deviation of 0.514. This implies that once all stakeholders including beneficiaries are involved in the monitoring and evaluation of EJO Heza project activities, the findings and recommendation can be implemented and followed effectively since the owners of the projects are taking part into the process. In the end, the project beneficiaries agreed that they were part of the people who decided where project activities can be allocated in Kayonza

district with the mean score of 3.91 and a heterogeneous standard deviation of 0.991.

9. Regression Model

Table 2: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.953a	0.909	0.905	0.16

a. Predictors: (Constant), Beneficiaries engagement,

According to results in Table 4.2 Beneficiaries engagement contribute to the in project implementation and success where ($R^2=0.953$). This implies that Beneficiaries engagement have positive contribution on project implementation and success. The rule of Thumb is that, usually an R square of more than 50% is considered as better. This study proves the rule of Thumb the R^2 is (0.909).

Table 3: ANOVA Test

Model	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.930	3	5.483	214.145	.000 ^a
	Residual	2.202	412	0.026		
	Total	24.132	415			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Beneficiaries engagement,
 b. Dependent Variable: Project implementation and success

ANOVA results further show explains project sustainability. The table above shows the sig value (0.000) less than the level significance (0.05). The F-statistics ($F=214.145$) is far greater than the P-value (0.000).

Table 4: Coefficient Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)					
	Beneficiaries engagement	.321	.145		4.618	0.000
		.671	0.085	.505	5.264	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project implementation and success

Using linear regression analysis from SPSS data bases, shows that Beneficiaries engagement influence the Project implementation and success with ($\text{sig}=0.000$ and 0.01).

Model specification: $Y=0.671+0.671x1+\epsilon$

10. Conclusions

The study concludes that the beneficiaries were more engaged into mid-term evaluation and project visibility through idea sharing with other community members and local leaders compared to how they were engaged into design and implementation stages of the project. Though the beneficiaries strongly agree that they understand the project goal and objectives, the researcher can conclude that the extent to which the beneficiaries were engaged into design up to evaluation was not on the same level as shown by the variation in the mean scores. However, their engagement has significant effect on the success of the project.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be further concluded that the EJO Heza project in kayonza district of Rwanda are perceived by the community to be sustainable since it was a felt need in the community and the beneficiaries are ready to continue and scale up project activities even after the project phase out. This shows how, when community are engaged in the whole stage of the project cycle its success is easier to be undertaken by them. The project ownership is more significant due the benefits brought by this project to its beneficiaries as the majority of the beneficiaries agreed to have improved living conditions since they joined the project. The monitoring and evaluation was a collective responsibility that involved all stakeholders including beneficiaries.

On the approaches used by the project implementers to engage beneficiaries, it can be concluded that focus group discussion was the most used approach followed by the testimony and success change story sharing to engage more beneficiaries and promote project sustainability. The interview also was used by the project staff to increase beneficiaries' participation into project activities. Finally, when testing the hypothesis using Pearson correlations, the researcher found community engagement has the highest effect on the project success in kayonza district where the project operates. This mean that the positive changes in the community engagement can affect the project success positively.

11. Recommendation

From the conclusion, Project mid-term evaluation and ideas sharing with others community members were the only phases where the beneficiaries were engaged more compared to other phases. Therefore, this study recommends the project staff and Global communities Rwanda to come up with other methods or strategies to engage the beneficiaries in the whole project phases equally in order to avoid bias among project beneficiaries. The study also recommends that the project beneficiaries should be given the opportunity to make decisions about their engagement because it is good to participate in the project with a good senses and knowing their contribution to the success of the project. It was clear that the majority of beneficiaries understand project goal and objectives but still some new community members were not aware of that. The study recommends that, the project staff and Global communities to always conduct regular training and meetings with the

new beneficiaries in order to increase project visibility and shape their understanding on the project intended outcomes.

From the conclusion, facilitated focus group discussion approach was the most approach that engaged beneficiaries always in the project phases and the interview some time. The study recommends the project staff and the management of Global communities to look other methods that are appropriates to beneficiaries like short survey and doing household vulnerability assessment and graduation survey to know who is lagging behind the project goal and objectives.

Though beneficiaries agreed that the project contributed to the living conditions and not all agreed that the project have meet their need on the same level, the study recommends the project staff should introduce meetings with project beneficiaries and allocate time for them in their schedules. This will open an avenue for people to share their views and opinions regarding the projects at hand. This will ensure that defects and faults are minimized which will in turn facilitate faster completion of project and its success.

From the beneficiaries' opinions during the interview and what they suggested as to improve the implementation of the project, the study recommends that, the Global communities should look ways to extend project duration and planned activities should be implemented within the planned timelines for example they should give beneficiaries loans on time without delay.

References

- [1] Akinbile and al.,(2006), L., Oladoja, M., Awoniyi, F., & Adisa, B. (2006). Effects of community participation on perception of sustainability of rural water projects in Oyun local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria. *Journal of Food, Agriculture and Environment Vol 4 (3&4)*, 257-261.
- [2] Burns & Grove,(2001), *The practice of nursing research: Conduct, critique and utilization 4th edition*. Philadelphia, USA: W.B. Saunders.
- [3] fuoku, (2011), A quasi experimental approach to determining success criteria for projects in system sciences. *proceedings of 36th Annual Hawaii International Conference* (pp. 12-13). Hawaii: System sciences.
- [4] Jean Marie Vianney, (2013), A retrospective look at our evolving understanding of project success. *Project Management Journal vol 36*, 19-31.
- [5] Kenneth,(1987), Success criteria and factors for international development projects: A life cycle based framework. *Project Management Journal 39(1)*, 72-84.
- [6] Ofuoku,(2011), Effect of community participation on sustainability of rural water projects in Delta Central Agricultural Zone of Delta State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultrual Extension and Rural development Vol.3 (7)*, 130-136.
- [7] Sonowabo, (2009), *Community Participation in Solid Waste Management in High-Density Low Income Areas: The case of C-section in Duncan Village*. University of Hale.

- [8] Stone,(1989), Cultural cross-roads od community participation in development: A case from Nepal . *Human Organization Vol.48. No. 3 .*
- [9] Thwala,(2010), Community participation is a necessity for project success: A case study of rural water supply projects in Jappes Reefs, South Africa. *African Journal of Agricultural Research Vol.5(10), 970-979.*
- [10] Twebaze,(2010), *Community Monilization in Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programs:How Effective is It? "A case of Wakiso District- Uganda.* Kampala: Makelele University.
- [11] UNDP,(2015), *Accelarating Socio-Economic Transformation and Sustaining Accountable Governance.* . Kigali, Rwanda: Rwanda National Human Development.
- [12] USA National Institute of Health, (2011). Weteridge, J. (1998). How can IS/IT projects be measured for success? *International Journal of Project Management 16,, 59-63.*