

Sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes in Kenya: A Case of Kakuma, Turkana County

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Abstract: *This study was carried out to investigate the factors influencing the sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes in Kenya: A Case of Food Assistance for Assets programme in Kakuma, Turkana County. This research was driven by the fact that after a couple of years, the projects initiated by a number of humanitarian organizations under the study sample, had either stalled or the benefits of these initiatives not fully enjoyed by the local communities. Four objectives guided this research; to examine how demographic characteristics of beneficiaries influence the sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes, to investigate the level to which weather conditions influence the sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes, to assess how beneficiaries' participation influences the sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes and to determine how capacity building of beneficiaries influences the sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes. The study adopted a descriptive research approach. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in collecting information from a sample of 40 beneficiaries, 2 WFP managers, and two managers from TRP, 2 Chiefs, and ten community leaders. The findings showed that there was a strong correlation between the size of the family and the sustainability of food assistance programmes. On education level, 85% never attained any form of education. On the influence of weather conditions, 85% of the respondents agreed that the distribution of rainfall across the area is not favourable to support any productive agricultural activities. On stakeholder participation, 85% of the respondents agreed that they are not consulted on matters to do with the implementation of the program but are most of the time informed of what is expected of them. The research also established that 60% of those interviewed had not been trained. Further, 35% of those trained said they had only been trained once in the past 12 months. The researcher, therefore, recommends that gender inequality and discrimination should be addressed to ensure that both men and women are involved at every stage of the programs. Regarding the weather aspect, the researcher proposes the introduction and/or expansion of climate-smart agriculture, which has proved to be the cure to most agricultural and environmental problems faced by most farmers in the semi-arid and arid regions. The food assistance programmes should also be designed from the beneficiaries' point of view, and they should also be fully involved in the implementation process. On the education level, since most of those interviewed had very low levels of education; their capacities to implement the program activities need to build and strengthened regularly.*

Keywords: Sustainability, Demographic, Characteristics, Weather conditions, Stakeholders, Participation, Capacity building

1. Introduction

There is a developing consent that prolonged food insecurity should be addressed in a more feasible way rather than as an emergency. Donors have become uncertain of the never-ending feeding programmes in most of the Semi-arid regions which undermine the resilience of communities in these regions. This has resulted in the higher adoption of FFA programme with the view of creating social protection mechanisms and safety nets. These mechanisms ensure that not only are lives saved but also provides the avenue for protection and strengthening of livelihoods. In addition to protecting and strengthening the community livelihoods, an avenue is also created to address the main causes of persistent food insecurity and poverty (World Vision, 2009).

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the Food Assistance for Assets programme has been most extensively employed as a model of food aid resulting from the recurrent drought that was most prominent in 1984-5 which was later aggravated by political turmoil. Consequently, most of the literature available has its origins from the experiences and lesson from FFA programme activities implemented in Ethiopia. (Humphrey, 1998). In Turkana County, Kakuma has been one of the key beneficiaries of the programme due to its susceptibility to prolonged droughts which leave its populace in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The FFA programme has been implemented in the area for several years, but the desired outcome of sustainable food

security has remained a mirage. The population in Kakuma has remained vulnerable to risks and hazards, and therefore in dire need of social safety nets such as direct food or cash support to meet their daily dietary requirements. However, the success of such interventions and the sustainability of their outcomes have remained invisible, leading to cyclical humanitarian assistance in the area. It was in view of this background that the researcher was inspired to investigate the factors which influence the sustainability of food assistance programmes: A case of Food Assistance for Assets Programme in Kakuma, Turkana County, Kenya.

2. Statement of the Problem

Among many developing countries, people have suffered from extreme hunger while others have succumbed to death notwithstanding the combined governments' and international humanitarian agencies' efforts to fund and support interventions intended to reverse the situation. For example, approximately 925 million people around the world were undernourished in the year 2010 (FAO, 2011). Efforts of countries working towards reducing hunger and extreme poverty have not been fruitful in some countries.

The Kenyan government has endeavoured to implement interventions to fight hunger. In addition, Non-Governmental Organizations and WFP-the food assistance arm of the United Nations, have been implementing food assistance programmes, including Food Assistance for

Assets in Kakuma among other regions in Kenya. Kakuma in Turkana County, Kenya has been a beneficiary of mitigating famine strategies especially the Food Assistance for Assets programme funded by WFP and implemented jointly by the Kenyan Government, WFP, and Turkana Rehabilitation Programme (TRP). This strategy has been used to help the drought-affected population in the entire Turkana County.

Generally, the Food Assistance for Assets Programme has been viewed as an important intervention since it does not only meet the dietary requirements of individuals but also helps vulnerable populations address future food needs, while building their resilience and strengthening their livelihoods. However, there has been a growing concern that the expected outcome of the intervention is never achieved as evidenced by the persistent vulnerability of the affected populations, for example, majority of the targeted beneficiaries in Kakuma still live in hunger and poverty despite being in the programme for over five years. It was in view of this that the researcher felt the need to look into the possible factors that influence the sustainability of food assistance programmes and especially the Food Assistance for Assets programme.

3. Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To examine how demographic characteristics of beneficiaries influence the sustainability of Food Assistance for Assets Programmes.
- ii. To determine the level to which weather conditions influence the sustainability of Food Assistance for Assets Programmes.
- iii. To assess how beneficiaries' participation influences the sustainability of Food Assistance for Assets Programmes.
- iv. To establish the extent to which capacity building of beneficiaries influences the sustainability of Food Assistance for Assets Programmes.

4. Literature Review

Every project is undertaken with the aim of seeing it overcome the test of time and all vagaries of nature among other limiting factors. Sustainability depends on a balance between the availability of resources and their use; so as to maintain any project or undertaking at a certain level without the depletion of any of the sustaining resources of the project or the project suffering from premature deaths. As put forward by Gray et al. (2019), the ability of a program to exist constantly, is fundamentally influenced by the levels of ownership of the program by the local community and that of involvement of the same community in the whole process (Allen et al, 2007).

Education levels among food assistance programme beneficiaries can influence their level of participation in decision making as well as the implementation processes which affects the outcomes. Education qualification can also determine the capacity of individuals to explore and exploit alternative innovations and technologies with the

potential to boost their development. Food Assistance for Assets programme in Kakuma targets members from the host community who are poor, food insecure and vulnerable; most of whom have not attained any form of education or have very low education, hence high illiteracy levels among the target beneficiaries. It's against this that the researcher intends to find out whether or not improving education among the disadvantaged communities would contribute to the achievement of sustainable food assistance programmes through the successful implementation of the Food Assistance for Assets programme.

Family size and age distribution affect the execution of projects and their sustainability. The elderly may be challenged when it comes to participating in physical project activities as opposed to the young and energetic members of the community. Similarly, in as much as a large family size can mean availability of labour, it is also disadvantageous when it comes to the amount of food and other resources needed to support it, (Author, 2014). In Zimbabwe, age distribution played a major role in determining labour distribution, and those households with more members adopted fish farming projects introduced by the government as a means of improving food security within the community (Jimmiel (2005).

Weather conditions play a vital role in the implementation and success of agricultural projects. Extreme weather conditions can affect the resilience of the food chain by destroying soil, thereby reducing crop yield (Kenya Food Security Steering Group, 2011). Agriculture-based livelihood projects face an immediate risk of crop failure, pests and diseases, and loss of livestock. People living in drylands are at greatest risk, and the first to be affected are those who are already vulnerable and food insecure. The absence of rains for long periods poses a great challenge in the successful implementation of agricultural projects since many of them depend on the availability of rainfall. Furthermore, many crops have annual cycles, and yields change with climate, especially temperature and rainfall. Maintaining food supply continuity when production is seasonal is, therefore, a big challenge. Floods and droughts are a particular challenge to the implementation and sustainability of rain-dependent projects (Devereux et al, 1999).

Some of the factors that impact the nature and quality of the actor's participation may include the participation style, relationships, information sharing and interaction. For example, local stakeholders with negative relationships with other stakeholders participate less frequently as compared to those with a positive relationship. According to Anyanwu (1992), Conventional Community participation has, however, been faulted for its limitation in the technical capacity as well as the fact that it assumes that communities are composed of people with homogenous characteristics and that is static. It is argued that conventional participation does not put into considerations a community's power dynamics, which may cause the decisions of an already powerful group to prevail at the expense of the marginalized (Cooke, 2001).

Participation as a theme has been suggested from two perspectives where one school of thought describes participation as a means as well as an end. In the former school of thought, participation is viewed as a way of achieving some important objective where resources are harnessed to achieve the development objectives that have been set. On the other hand, participation as an end focuses on empowering the communities so that they can be in charge of their own development objective, here participation is seen as a way of empowering the individuals with the skills, knowledge and experiences that are necessary (Hardina, 2003).

Participation can also be considered from a weak or strong dimension where weak participation involves informing and consulting while strong participation consists of involving partnership and control according to Hardina (2003). Neither of the levels of participation in the continuum can be deemed to be better than the other since different levels at the continuum are useful at different development times and contexts (Wilcox, 1994). Several approaches to encourage participation in development have been used, and they define participation of beneficiaries at different levels: Induced involvement; this is where the strategy for the project is already predetermined, and the intended project participants are expected to carry out certain participatory activities in order to benefit from the project. Participation may range from the contribution of labour to the contribution of materials that are used in the project (Kumar, 2002).

People's involvement in the implementation of community development projects is a vital element in the development of the rural areas, and it is well attested to in research literature ((Moughalu, 1986; Okafor, 1984; Asnarukhadi&Fariborz, 2009; Udoye, 1992; Udensi, 2012; Udoh, 2012; Ekong, 2010;). Success indicator for the realization of development projects is a high level of citizen involvement that can only be ensured if people's initiative is sufficiently stimulated to inspire enthusiasm and full involvement (Anyanwu, 1992). Sharma (1997) argues that "participation is not regarded as having been committed to any social goals but is regarded as a technique for setting goals, choosing priorities and deciding what resources to commit to goal attainment". The rationale for this is that the possibility of remarkable success is assured when those directly involved are effectively involved in planning and implementation. Piccioto (1992) and Madlavu& Davis (1993) believe that participating is sharing, owning and allowing people to be responsible for their own development, determining their needs and framing their own development strategies and owning the process.

Capacity building is the ability to effectively, efficiently and sustainably execute functions (United Nations Development Programme-UNDP). According to Hope (2009) Capacity building is seen as enhancing the capacity of individuals and local communities to engage in sustainable activities for positive development, poverty reduction and meeting the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). Capacity building involves strengthening capacity performance by empowering those most

marginalized by giving the community equal opportunities to access resources.

Building community-level functional capacities remain critical in global participatory development strategies. An assessment by the World Bank (2006) showed that in an effort to provide a sustainable platform for future growth in Cambodia, development agencies had adopted an interconnected approach that plays a critical role in building capacity at the local level. This focus reflects the importance of supporting community-level growth and bottom-up development interventions in a primarily rural society that remains largely clustered around the village and where rural-urban ties remain weak. Community Health Workers (CHWs) studies on the implementation of health programs show that in India, such CHWs receive training for approximately three months, while in other countries like Brazil they receive training for approximately six to eight months at the start of their career. (Campos et al., 2004).

In Kenya, a study carried out by Koech (2008) on Kenya Green Growers Projects in Eldama ravine indicates that only facilitators and leaders were given formal education, the other community project implementers were taken through demonstrations because of their low educational levels. Most of the studies done are based on the implementation of organizational and institutional programs, in which the implementers are illiterates, thus a positive correlation between capacity building and program implementation. A study by Ropp (1999) in Malaysia concluded that for teachers to implement the usage of computers, they should be computer literate and thus be given appropriate training in computer usage.

5. Research Methodology

This research employed a descriptive survey design. A survey is a way to gather information about a group of people's characteristics, actions or opinions. It assists in describing data and features about a population and the phenomenon being studied, Best (2004). This design was appropriate for the research as it enabled the collection of data from the sample on the factors influencing the sustainability of the Food Assistance for Assets programme. In addition to this, it allowed the study observes and draw conclusions from the manipulation of the independent variables while keeping the resultant effects on the dependent variable; this was the main objective of conducting the research.

The target population used in this research was drawn from key stakeholders who are directly involved in the FFA Program. This was in Kakuma Ward of Turkana West Constituency, Turkana County. The composition of the respondents was drawn from 2 Managers from the World Food Programme, 2 Managers from Turkana Rehabilitation Program-TRP, 200 Beneficiaries, 2 Chiefs and 50 Community Leaders. The researcher purposively chose 2 WFP Managers, 2 Managers from Turkana Rehabilitation Programme, and 2 Chiefs. The researcher also chose randomly, 20 % of the Total beneficiaries (200)

and Community leaders (50); this brought a total of 56 Respondents.

6. Study Findings

Influence of Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents on the Sustainability Food Assistance Program

One of the research objectives was to examine the impact of demographic characteristics of the beneficiaries on the sustainability of the Food Assistance Program. In order to establish the influence of demographic characteristics of the respondents, the study obtained responses on age, gender, family size and education qualification of the beneficiaries. Concerning gender, the study established that 90% of the program implementers/beneficiaries were female, with only 10% being representing the male gender. This implies that for every man, there are nine women involved in the program activities. Further questioning indicated that this was not by default but rather the program design as a way of empowering women in the affected communities. It was also established that 52.5% of the respondents agreed that gender influences the sustainability of food assistance programs. In terms of age, the research found out that most of the beneficiaries were aged between 19 and 30 years old at 52.5% followed by those aged between 31 and 40 years at 30. The study also showed that 90% of the implementers were of the view that age determines the success and sustainability of programs.

Further, the study found out that 17.5% of the implementers had family members between 1 and 5 while 55% had between 6 and 10, and 27.5% had more than ten members. Again, the findings showed that there was a strong correlation between the size of the family and the sustainability of food assistance programmes. On educational background, 15% of the beneficiaries attained primary level education while 85% never attained any form of education. Out of the 40 respondents, 50% of them said education strongly influences the implementation of programs and their sustainability.

Influence of Weather Conditions on the sustainability of food assistance programmes

Another objective of the study was to determine the level to which weather conditions influence the sustainability of Food Assistance for Assets Programmes. Under this objective, the distribution of rainfall, and the frequency of drought were investigated to determine their influence on the sustainability of food assistance programmes. Kakuma is generally dry, and the respondents corroborated this fact when 22.5% of them strongly agreed, and 42.5% agreed that the amount of rainfall the area receives is not sufficient for agricultural production. 50% of respondents again strongly agreed, and 35% agreed that the distribution of rainfall across the area is not favourable to support any productive agricultural activities. These findings, therefore, support the hypothesis that weather conditions influence the sustainability of food assistance programmes.

Influence of Beneficiaries' Participation on the Sustainability of food assistance programmes

Beneficiaries' participation was another factor that was investigated to determine its effect on the sustainability of food assistance programmes. The participation was investigated in terms of resource contribution, consultation, interaction, and information provision. Under this factor, 85% of the respondents agreed that the implementers are not consulted on matters to do with the implementation of the program but are most of the time informed of what is expected of them. 52.5% of the respondents confirmed that their main contribution towards the program is through the provision of labour or manpower, while 5% said they donate labour, land, working implements and ideas. 47.5% of the respondents agreed that the beneficiaries' level of involvement influences the success and sustainability of the program, while 37.5% disagreed. There were other 15% of them who did not know what to say about this. Based on these findings, the research accepts the hypothesis that beneficiary participation influences the sustainability of food assistance programmes.

Influence of Capacity Building of Beneficiaries on the Sustainability of Food assistance programmes.

This variable looked at whether the beneficiaries were trained, how many times they were trained, and frequency of the training and relevance of the training. From the study, it was established that 16 (40%) of the respondents had at least been trained, while 60% of them had not been trained before. Further, 35% of those trained said they had only been trained once in the past 12 months. Additionally, 87.5% of the respondents agreed that there was a correlation between beneficiaries' capacity and the success and sustainability of the projects. These findings accept the hypothesis that the capacity building of beneficiaries influences the sustainability of food assistance programmes.

7. Conclusions

The Food Assistance programme made deliberate steps towards empowering women since it focuses on the female gender more than the male. However, it will not be wise to think that this is all that is needed for community development to be realized. Gender inequality is still deeply rooted in African society to the point that women have no access to nor control over the key resources needed for that development work. As such, the affirmative action in such programs is nothing more than just a requirement for the program, and for as long as men remain to dominate their households, the real objective of enrolling more women in the program will never be achieved.

The greater number of the households represented in the study have relatively large families of between 6 and 10 members or more indicating that it may put pressure on the provision of basic needs of the beneficiaries; thus, little time left to focus on the implementation of the projects. On the other hand, however, a large family could mean

more manpower to work on the projects as well as supporting parents to complete their work norms in the program – but this is not the scenario in most cases. Education-wise, a bigger number of the beneficiaries are illiterate since they never went to school and replication of the concepts learnt in the program at household level may be close to impossible.

Community development programs should be designed from the beneficiaries' perspective instead of the donors' if they are to bring any significant change in the community. The findings of this research indicated that in most cases, the beneficiaries are not adequately involved especially in the initial stages of the program. This results in the implementation of foreign ideas which are never owned by the communities. Besides ownership, the commitment of the beneficiaries is also unsatisfactory, and their only source of motivation being the food they expect at the end of the month – which is short-term and unsustainable. This has in one way or another contributed to the perennial food insecurity in the region and the increased dependency on food assistance among the vulnerable members of the community as indicated by the study findings.

Finally, appropriate training relevant to the projects implemented is required to ensure that beneficiaries have the basic knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation and replication of project's activities at household level as well as their expansion. The study findings showed that the project's success is pegged on the capacity of the beneficiaries to implement the project's activities, and this should, therefore, be emphasized.

8. Recommendations

The Food Assistance programmes and especially the Food Assistance for Assets program in Kakuma has been in progress for several years, and there is no sign that it will end any time soon. This is because it has failed to create the desired results and outcomes.

Findings have shown that there are many areas that need to be addressed if Kakuma's narrative on the sustainability of the food assistance programmes is to change, and that is why the researcher recommends the following:

i. For any community development project to succeed, gender inequality and discrimination should be addressed to ensure that both men and women are involved at every stage of the programs. Following the study findings, men have been deliberately left out in the development activities, and there is a need to involve them adequately. This is because, in the African culture, women don't have access to or control over the key resources needed for development and therefore, bringing more men who into the picture would be a big contribution towards the success of any development initiatives such as the Food Assistance for Assets program.

ii. Regarding the weather aspect, the researcher proposes the introduction and/or expansion of climate-smart agriculture, which has proved to be the cure to most agricultural and environmental problems faced by most

farmers in the arid and semi-arid regions. Climate change and climate variability have an effect on the sustainability of the programmes and failure to mainstream climate change adaptation into programming in future will likely affect sustainability even more.

iii. Designing and implementation of development projects require full involvement of the beneficiaries for ownership and sustainability. The researcher, therefore, recommends that the food assistance programmes should be designed from the beneficiaries' point of view, and the beneficiaries should also be fully involved in the implementation process.

iv. Since most beneficiaries have very low levels of education, their capacities to implement the program activities need to build and strengthened regularly. Besides lacking the requisite knowledge and skills to implement programme-related work, illiterate people lack the knowledge and skills to replicate these activities at the household level.

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