

INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVEMENT ON PROJECT OUTCOMES. A CASE OF WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH) PROJECT IN RWANDA

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ABSTRACT

Project managers are always looking forward to seeing public projects perform well. This involves finishing the project on time, within budget, meeting product specifications, meeting customer needs and requirements and meeting management objectives. Despite the quest for project success, many poverty eradication projects in Rwanda have continuously experienced time overrun, budget overrun, unmet product specifications, unmet customer needs and requirements and unmet management objectives. The purpose of this study was to evaluate stakeholders' involvement in project outcome through gathering and analyzing the information on the level of involvement of stakeholders in the process of project cycle management (PCM). The study sought to assess stakeholder's involvement in project identification, project planning, project execution and project review on project outcome. This study employed descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was the various stakeholders in the WASH project in Rwanda. Data was collected from a sample of 409 respondents. The primary data was collected from the community members using a semi structured questionnaire. In addition to questionnaire, the other primary data was obtained through interview to and observations. The researcher analyzed quantitative data using descriptive statistics by applying the statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS V.21.0). Conceptual content analysis was used for data that was qualitative in nature or aspect of the data collected from the open-ended questions and the interview guide. In addition, descriptive analysis was applied to determine the relative contribution of each of the four variables with respect to project outcome. This study found that stakeholders' involvement in project initiation, planning, implementation, and review contributed to project outcome. This study found that stakeholders involvement in project implementation contributed most to project outcome ($r = 0.971$) followed by project review ($r = 0.681$), then project planning ($r = 0.651$) while projects identification ($r = 0.571$) had the least influence on project outcome. The study recommends that enough funds and skills should be allocated to projects. The study also recommends that the constituents should play a critical role in decision making because they are the beneficiaries of the projects and know well projects are beneficial to them

Key words: *Project identification, project planning, project execution, project review, stakeholders' involvement*

1.1 Background

Stakeholder Involvement is critical to the success of every project in every organization (Moodley 2012). Mitchell, Agle and Wood (2007) suggests that in a project environment, stakeholders are usually numerous, and can vary significantly in the degree of influence. Stakeholder Involvement can take place in different parts of the project cycle and at different levels of society, and take many different forms. These can range along a continuum from contribution of inputs, predetermination of projects, information sharing, consultation, decision-making, partnership and empowerment. Involvement is both a means and an end. As a means, it is a process in which people and communities cooperate and collaborate in developing the project (Andersen, 2009).

Stakeholder involvement is arguably more important than ever because of the ‘interconnected nature of the world’ (Bryson, 2013). Any societal issue be it economic development, poor education performance, environmental concerns, ethnicity, terrorism affects numerous people, groups and organizations and in ‘shared –power world, no one is fully in charge’ (Kettler, 2009). Thus it requires participatory approach by all stakeholders in identifying and solving the problem afflicting the society (Mulwa, 2008). Attention should be given to stakeholders’ interests and needs in order to achieve common good and realization of project objectives (Bryson, Cunningham & Lokkesmore, 2012) ‘People engage in what they feel part of and value what they help to build. Engaging citizens and local communities is indispensable when it comes to developing a sense of ownership in decision making.’ (www.guardian.co.uk) Thus, to create a sense of ownership, stakeholders should be involved fully in the project meant to solve their needs. Stakeholders have power to influence the project outcome either positively or negatively (Chinyio & Olomolaiye 2010).

In a constructive project, stakeholders’ perception is crucial. If negative and thus dissatisfied, can severely obstruct its implementation resulting in cost overruns and exceeding time schedules due to conflicts and controversies (Olander, 2004). Stakeholders bring a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experiences to the project and if they are well managed (Bourne, 2006) they can help to make the project more successful (TISA, 2010). The success or failure of many conventional development projects and programmes has been attributed to stakeholders’ inclusion or lack of involvement in the project Cycle management (Baker & Sherrif, 2009).

However, critique against the participation-paradigm has increased. Brody (2013) discusses the risk that the participation of conflicting interests slows down decision-making and results in unfortunate compromises between biodiversity conservation and economic development. Galaz (2015) shows how decision-making in a Swedish water common-pool resource institution was blocked by strategic behavior among participating resource users that wanted to avoid costly measures. Such outcomes might erode social capital rather than building it (Conley & Moote 2013). In addition, local participation might decrease accuracy of management because it dilutes the impact of scientific knowledge on conservation decisions (du Toit *et al.* 2014).

Similarly, it has been questioned whether local and traditional knowledge really has a role to play in today’s rapidly changing world (Briggs & Sharp 2014). The assumption that local participation automatically improves legitimacy of decisions has also been questioned. Powerless and poor people may lack the capacity to participate fully, and so the decisions made in participatory processes might become more biased towards enforcing existing power structures than would decisions made by democratically elected and representative bodies.

In Uganda, Mubatsi (2009) observed that development education efforts to include local stakeholders have often consisted of irregular information gathering sessions held at schools or district headquarters. Though laudable, such efforts are not sufficient. Local stakeholder participation is most useful when arranged around the schedules and meeting norms of the hardest-working and poorest community members. Participation of key stakeholders was found to be the single most important factor in determining project outcomes in a survey of ecosystem management in Sri Lanka and India (Isham & Kahkonen, 2002). In Ghana, the old Fadama community was not involved in designing the Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project (KLERP) and its outcomes and therefore they resisted the project as a reaction to perceived abuse of their procedural right (Armah et al, 2009). A project is said to be successfully completed when it has met the stakeholders' interests and expectations. Even if it meets time, budget and scope criterion, it will not be deemed successful if the needs of the stakeholders and their expectations are not met (Lynda & Derek, 2006).

1.1.1 Overview of stakeholder's involvements in projects in Rwanda

In December 2008, the Government of Netherlands and UNICEF signed a Cooperation agreement with the Government of Rwanda to support a bid to develop the country's level of water supply and sanitation coverage and hygiene practices in line with government targets set for the sector through Vision 2020, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) Sector Policy.

Four target districts were selected for this project because of their low levels of access to safe water and sanitation as compared to national figures. These districts are Burera and Musanze in Northern Province and Nyabihu and Rubavu in Western Province. Over the five-year period (2009-2013) the project's objective has been to deliver across the target districts sustained access to safe water and appropriate use of improved sanitation to at least 800,000 targeted beneficiaries, including 250,000 pupils and teachers in 200 schools and 50,000 patients and staff in 50 health institutions. At household level across the four districts, 1320 ECOSAN and 3899 improved latrines were constructed.

Of the total programme budget, the Netherlands Government contributed US\$ 17.44 million; the Rwandan Government gave US\$ 2.25 million, UNICEF US\$ 1.2 million, while beneficiaries contributed US\$ 0.55 million. The programme's cumulative budget was set at 12,864,600,000Rwf. (SNV, 2014). Hence the need for this study to answer the influence of stakeholders involvement in projects.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Project managers are always looking forward to seeing public projects perform well. This involves finishing the project on time, within budget, meeting end product specifications, meeting customer needs and requirements and meeting management objectives (Cooke-Davies, 2012). Despite the quest for project success, many projects in Rwanda have continuously experienced time overrun, budget overrun, unmet end product specifications, unmet customer needs and requirements and unmet management objectives (Auditor general's report, 2008). The high failure rate in these projects could be due to failure to involve key stakeholders in project activities. Despite wide range of knowledge on project planning and management, project failure is still reported (ICAD, 2010). Stakeholders expect to be involved in decision making process within the project cycle. However, this is not the case as complains of exclusion are still reported.

Various studies elsewhere such as Adan (2012) on CDF projects in Isiolo North Constituency in Kenya and Golicha (2011) on NGO'S supporting education projects in Garissa District have been conducted in evaluating stakeholders' involvement in relation to project outcome. There are also cost based challenges as the 30 million allocated is fully exhausted and most of the targeted infrastructure are either inadequate or totally missing. The project was envisaged as a short-term intensive programme to be implemented within a period of six months commencing 1st July, 2009 and was expected to be complete by 31st December, 2009. However, as at April, 2013, the project is incomplete with inadequate physical facilities (Economic Stimulus Programme Handbook, 2009). The researcher would want to find out whether findings in other studies above done in other loci would concur or disagree with those findings of the selected project. Therefore, this study sought to fill the gap of knowledge on stakeholder's involvement in WASH Project.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of stakeholders' involvement on project outcomes in Rwanda

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the influence of stakeholders' involvement in project identification on WASH project outcomes.
2. To determine the influence of stakeholders' involvement in project planning on WASH project outcomes
3. To evaluate the influence of stakeholders' involvement in project execution on WASH project outcome
4. To find out the influence of stakeholders' involvement in project review on WASH project outcome

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the influence of stakeholders' involvement in project identification on WASH project outcomes?
2. How does stakeholders' involvement in project planning influence WASH project outcomes?
3. Do stakeholders involvement in project execution influence WASH project outcome?
4. How does stakeholders' involvement in project review influence WASH project outcome?

2.0 Critique of the Existing Literature

From the reviewed literature, the success of a project can ultimately depend on the ability to develop the support of, and manage the expectations of, key people. The successful management of stakeholders can have a substantial and immediate impact – satisfied stakeholders can greatly improve the progress and relevance of a project and ultimately contribute significantly to its success.

Several studies have been done on the effects of stakeholder involvement on project performance. Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher (2005) examine a collaborative approach to the relationship between heritage management and tourism development in Luang Prabang, Laos.

The stakeholder theory can contribute to understand projects by highlighting the importance of consideration of the stakeholders during planning, whether due to moral value for considering them or due to their influence on the project O'Halloran, (2014). It has a potential to assist in identifying the stakeholders including who and what they affect. It can also assist to classify the stakeholders as internal and external, primary, and secondary, or based on evaluation of their influence and importance towards the project Menoka, (2014). However, the theory does not give a clear guidance on how to exactly understand the settings and implementation, thus various frameworks of stakeholder theory exists that assist to achieve this Adan (2012). Even though the theory holds the potential to identify and group stakeholders, other authors argue that grouping approach of the theory widely focuses on heterogeneity across groups than within groups hence resulting in false perceptions on some of the groups and their members (Wolfe & Putler, 2012).

Additionally, the theory demonstrates another weakness that Fassin (2008) refers to as multiple inclusion which occurs when some individuals belong to more than one stakeholder group at the same time. This could be due to occupying more than one role simultaneously either within subgroups or cutting across them. Thus, such individuals could have varying influences on the project at different stages according to their given roles at particular instances (Meridith, 2009).

Major weaknesses of the theory have been highlighted such as subjectivity of categorization process as analysis teams are likely to be influenced by their backgrounds, environment or people involved in the process (Morrow, 2006). It is also prone to indirect limitations such as in terms of honesty and reliability of the collected stakeholder information. Similarly, stakeholders' influence, interest and power changes with stages thus generalization is usually problematic, such as grouping taxpayers in tertiary, while they have a great potential power to obstruct project implementation.

Orodho (2013) defines a research design as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to obtain answers to research problem. Kothari (2009) refers to it as a blueprint. Both commonly look at it as an important element in successful research study. A research design ensures that the study is relevant to the problem as the success of any study is highly depended on the design employed by the researcher.

This study employed descriptive survey design. Descriptive method involves measurement, classification, comparison, and interpretation of data while the survey method is suitable as it is used in gathering data from a relatively large number of cases at a time. This design was preferred because the questions raised in the study require collecting data through administration of questionnaires and interviewing the respondents and it is effective when the study involves a large population.

3.0 Target Population

A population is defined as an entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). This would assist to conserve resources for the researcher. The target population for this study was the various stakeholders of the WASH project in Musanze District. This district was picked since it had the lowest population size served by the project further, the researcher selected the Kanyansyo-Rwaza water scheme. The total target population was 11,901

Table 31: Target Population

Target Population	Total
Local Community	11,865
Contractor	1
School infrastructure Committee members	4
Government regulatory agencies officials	8
Religious Leaders	9
Administrative leaders	9
Donor agencies	3
Total	11,901

3.1 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame describes the list of all population units from which the sample will be selected (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). For this study, the sampling frame came from Kanyansyo-Rwaza water scheme project documents held by Rwanda Energy, Water, and Sanitation Authority (EWSA).

4.0 Correlation analysis

To quantify the relationship and strength of the relationship between the variables, the study used Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (or Pearson correlation coefficient for short) is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by r . The Pearson correlation coefficient, r , can take a range of values from +1 to -1. A value of 0 indicates that there is no association between the two variables. A value greater than 0 indicates a positive association, that is, as the value of one variable increases so does the value of the other variable. A value less than 0 indicates a negative association, that is, as the value of one variable increases the value of the other variable decreases

Table 32: Correlation and the coefficient of determination

	Project outcome	Stakeholders involvement in projects identification	Stakeholders involvement in project planning	Stakeholders involvement in project implementation	Stakeholders involvement in project review
Project outcome (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed)	1.000				
Stakeholders involvement in projects identification (r) (p) (2 tailed)	0.571 0.020	1.000			
Stakeholders involvement in project planning (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed)	0.651 0.027	0.423 0.006	1.000		
Stakeholders involvement in project implementation (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed)	0.971 0.025	0.443 0.002	0.437 0.000	1.000	
Stakeholders involvement in project review (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed)	0.681 0.017	0.343 0.000	0.620 0.000	0.551 0.014	1.000

The analysis of correlation results between project outcome and Stakeholders involvement in projects identification show a positive coefficient 0.571, with p-value of 0.02. It indicates that the result is significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ and that if the Stakeholders involvement in projects identification increases it will have a positive impact on project outcome. The correlation results between Stakeholders involvement in projects planning and project outcome also indicates the same type of result where the correlation coefficient is 0.651 and a p-value of 0.027 which significant at $\alpha = 5\%$. The results also show that there is a positive association between Stakeholders involvement in project implementation and project outcome where the correlation coefficient is 0.971, with a p-value of 0.025. Further, the result shows that there is a positive association between Stakeholders involvement in project review and project outcome where the correlation coefficient is 0.681, with a p-value of 0.017. This therefore infers that Stakeholders involvement in project implementation contributed most to project outcome followed by stakeholder's involvement in project review, then Stakeholders involvement in project planning while Stakeholders involvement in projects identification had the least influence on project outcome.

4.1 Regression analysis

Beside correlation analysis that showed relationship between the variables, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Regression analysis sought to establish the percentage variation on project outcomes that would be attributed to the four independent variables separately as well as when combined. The findings of the analysis were as shown in the Table 3

Table 33: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.892 ^a	.718	.709	.112

a. Predictors: (Constant), project identification, project planning, project execution and project review

The adjusted R², also called the coefficient of multiple determinations, is the percent of the variance in the dependent explained uniquely or jointly by the independent variables. Table 4.11 shows that R square is .718 implying that 71.8% of the variation in the dependent variable (project outcome) that is explained by all the four independent variables (project identification, project planning, project execution and project review).

Table 34: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.175 ^a	3	.192	12.008	.000 ^b
	Residual	1.309	82	.017		
	Total	7.484	85			

a. Dependent Variable: Project outcome

b. Predictors: (Constant), project identification, project planning, project execution and project review

Table 4.7 provides the *F- test* that helps determine whether the model is a good fit for the data. The findings show that the *P- value* is less than 0.05 implying that the model is a good fit for the data. In this regard, the studied independents variables would explain variation in dependent variable.

Table 35: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.365	.231		1.973	.106
	project identification	.116	.009	.444	1.815	.009
	project planning	.282	.050	1.231	3.616	.036
	project implementation	.274	.017	1.075	3.159	.025
	project review	.204	.240	.230	.850	.028

From the data in the above table the established regression equation was

$$Y = 0.365 + 0.116 X_1 + 0.282 X_2 + 0.274 X_3 + 0.204 X_4$$

From the above regression equation, it was revealed that holding project identification, project planning, project execution and project review to a constant zero, project outcome would be at 0.365. A unit increase on project identification would lead to increase in project outcome by a factor of 0.116, a unit increase in project planning would lead to increase in project outcome by a factor of 0.282, a unit increase in project execution would lead to increase in project outcome by a factor of 0.274 and unit increase in project review would lead to increase in project outcome by a factor of 0.204.

5.0 Conclusions

From the findings, the study concludes that not all key stakeholders were involved in the first two stages. Failure to involve the key stakeholders in the initial and planning stages of the project cycle led to project delay and thus also increased cost of the project relocating and redesigning. This study concludes that project outcome and Stakeholders involvement in projects identification show a positive coefficient 0.571, with p-value of 0.02. It indicates that the result is significant at $\alpha = 5\%$ and that if the Stakeholders involvement in projects identification increase it will have a positive impact on project outcome. The study also found that Stakeholders were involved in analyzing the needs of the community in terms of the type of projects, were doing stakeholder analysis, including users and support personnel, were doing financial analysis of the costs and benefits including a budget and were reviewing of current operations.

The study also concludes that between Stakeholders involvement in projects planning and project outcome there exists a positive relationship with a coefficient 0.651 and a p-value of 0.027 which significant at $\alpha = 5\%$. The study also found that Stakeholders were involved in identifying roles and responsibilities, were identifying the activities needed to complete the deliverables and were playing the role of estimating the resource requirements for the activities and risk planning.

The study further concludes that there is a positive association between Stakeholders involvement in project implementation and project outcome where the correlation coefficient is 0.971, with a p-value of 0.025. The study also established that stakeholders were involved in procurement of materials and equipment, were coordinating people and resources, were performing activities of project in accordance with project management plan and were doing the update of risk analysis.

Further, the study concludes that there is a positive association between stakeholders involvement in project review and project outcome where the correlation coefficient is 0.681, with a p-value of 0.017. The study established that Stakeholders were involved in measuring the ongoing activities, were monitoring project variables (cost, scope, effort etc) against the project management plan and project outcome baseline, were identifying corrective actions to address issues and risks properly and were influencing the factors that could circumvent integrated change control. The project can be classified as challenged as it kicked off and is still going on thus not a failed one. It exceeded the initial costs and time overrun as up to now it is incomplete thus not successful as it does not measure the set criterion of time, cost, scope and customer satisfaction.

5.1 Recommendations

The study established that factors influencing completion of projects were insufficient funds and insufficient skills in project planning and management. The study therefore recommends that enough funds and skills should be allocated to projects.

The study found that stakeholder involvement influence performance of the Project. The study therefore recommends that the community should play a critical role in decision making because they are the beneficiaries of the projects and know well projects are beneficial to them. Therefore, all the stakeholders should be involved in the choosing the project location, analyzing the needs of the community in terms of the type of school and in financial analysis of the costs and benefits.

The study further recommends that there should be good communication channel during the implementation stage to get rid of propaganda and misinformation especially information to the local community where the project is associated with the political class.

Transparency during awarding of tenders (avoidance of long bureaucratic tendering process) is key to the success of Projects. The committee should encourage community participation, cooperation among committee members and auditing of complete project to access their worth.

5.2. Areas for further research

From the study and related conclusions, the researcher recommends further research in the influence of stakeholders' involvement on performance of Projects in the Rwanda. Further studies should be done on the factors influencing performance of projects in other projects. A study should also be done on the factors influencing performance of other projects funded by the government for example Computer for schools' project funds.

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