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INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: CASE OF *KIREHE* COMMUNITY-BASED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT *PROJECT* IN KIREHE DISTRICT, RWANDA.

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholder management is widely viewed as the key to ensuring that organizations meet the needs of the people they serve by encouraging transparency and accountability of the organizations and granting the stakeholders ownership of the programs and the solutions therein. Research has however shown that there is minimal stakeholders' management in most organizations that deal with development. This leads to the projects not being demand-driven and therefore not achieving their intended outcomes. This study sought to establish the influence of stakeholder management on implementation of irrigation projects in Rwanda: A case of Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project in Kirehe District. The study aimed to achieve the following objectives; to determine the influence of beneficiaries' community management in the implementation of projects; to examine the influence of employee's management in the implementation of projects; to establish the influence of donors' management in the implementation of projects and to determine the influence of supplier's management in the implementation of projects in Kirehe District. Descriptive research design was used in this study. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The target population was 180 stakeholders in Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management in Kirehe District. A sample size of 191 respondents was derived by using Fisher et.al, formula with 80% response rate. The study used both primary and secondary data, where questionnaires, interview was used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed through SPSS version 21. Data analysis involved statistical computations for averages, percentages, and correlation and regression analysis. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression method of analysis was adopted to determine the inferential statistics. The findings indicated that holding all the independent variables constant at zero, project implementation increased by 0.483. However, a unit increment in employees' involvement while holding all other factors constant led to 0.205 increments in project implementation. A unit increment in community` involvement taking all other factors constant at zero led to an increment of .179 with regards to project implementation. These findings indicate that stakeholders' involvement have a positive influence on project implementation. Employees had the greatest influence on project implementation followed by community beneficiaries. The influence of all these stakeholders was positive as indicated by the positive beta co-efficient. The study recommends that firms ought to readily involve the community in project development and evaluation so that significant changes in customers` tastes and preferences can be addressed. The study recommends that an implementation of appropriate measures to develop the benefits that come with supplier performance and other cost saving opportunities requires fine-tuned balancing of all variables, for example, too much emphasis on the price and delivery schedule might hamper the development of the supplier's product and process quality.

Key words: Beneficiaries' community management, Employee's management, donors' management, supplier's management, implementation of projects

1.1 Background to the study

Management of stakeholders has been widely acknowledged as a key component of programming since the 1970s (Smith, 2012). Management of the stakeholders is the sharing by people in the benefits of development, active contribution of people to development and management of people in decision-making at all levels of society (Johns Hopkins University and William Brieger, 2006). According to World Bank, (2006) stakeholder management is the process through which stakeholders' influence and share control over development initiatives and the decision and resource which affect them. Development experience over the last few decades and the increased concern of international funding agencies and nonprofit organizations in social sector have made stakeholder management an inevitable part of the development process.

Community-based development projects assume management of beneficiaries in the implementation and management of the schemes under consideration. Management of stakeholders in project implementation is supposed to make the development demand driven and effective. However, stakeholder management in project implementation is not realized across the globe. According to Hansen, (2007) there is very minimal stakeholders' management in projects in Australia. There is an also minimal stakeholder 'management in project implementation in projects in Somali (Newell 2001). According to Newell (2001) all projects which were having stakeholders as primary beneficiaries never involved them in implementation from project initiation to project phase out.

Stakeholder management is a fundamental principle of the CRC and was ratified by the African Union through the African charter on the rights and welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990 and by the government of Rwanda through the Stakeholders' Act of 2004. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) asserts that meaningful management is important for their growth and development and emphasizes that the management of stakeholders can make a difference in the communities and enhances democracy (UNICEF, 2002). However, according to Kofi Annan, the world is full of vulnerability and exclusivity for stakeholders and calls for the world to fight for the rights of stakeholders that are neglected (UNICEF, 2006). It is shown from previous research (Simon, 1997; World Vision International report, 2006; Reed, 2008; Hansen, 2007; Abelson et al., 2007) that there is little stakeholder management in project implementation.

Irrigation projects are workplace scenarios that involve interaction among many different participants such as the project team as a unit, as individuals and also interact with units outside the project team (Morardet, Merrey, Seshoka, Sally, 2005). In view of the composition and interactions that take place in irrigation project during coordination of resources, time and information, participants form a society with a complex set of interrelated relationships and diversity of goals, values and interests (Hart,2000). According to Galtung (2000), conflict occurs when incompatibility or diversity of values, goals and interests arises. Pinto (1998), postulate three distinct views that have evolved about conflict within management in projects and organizations. He noted traditional view of conflict which was dominant from the late nineteenth century until the mid-1940s which assumed that conflict was bad, had negative impact and lead to declines in performance as the level of conflict increased. He also identified the behavioral or contemporary approach as the second view which emerged in the late 1940s and held its way through the 1970s. The view postulated that conflict was natural and inevitable in all organizations and that it may result to either a positive or a negative effect, depending on how it's handled. The latest conflict perspective that he noted was the interactions view which assumed conflict as necessary to increase performance. Bresmen and Haslan, (1991) agreed with the last view by stating that, management conflicts are meaningful and produce beneficial results to a project. Loosemore, (2000) argue that, meaningful or what is termed as functional conflicts give a doorway of opportunities to organizational learning and creativity.

Renowned irrigation projects such as the Arabian Peninsula at Yemen, which dates back to 2000 years (FAO, 2009) and Negev Desert irrigation project built by the Israeli and the Nabataean and Roman Byzantian projects which extends between 1300 years and 2900 years ago acknowledged the existence of conflict during project implementation and therefore the management designed elaborate conflict mechanisms to address factors that influenced conflicts within management such as water allocation, leadership, personal values and communication (Uphoff, 1991).

In Africa, the implementation of irrigation systems has been followed with environmental conflicts and increasing tension among different stakeholders (Matlick, 2002**).** Many projects in the past were designed and implemented in a top-down fashion, with little or no real management of the supposed beneficiaries in designing and implementing projects. This led to lack of capacity by the community and the project team to address conflict effectively and sustainably (Ngigi, 2002).

Rwanda has launched his Vision 2020 which aims at transforming it from a low-income country into a middle-income country by the year 2020. This ambition would be realized around six pillars, one of them being a productive and market orientated agriculture. The Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA) forms the framework for enhancing agricultural development. The agricultural sector in Rwanda is indeed the most important in terms of contribution to gross domestic product (GDP), employment and foreign exchange earnings. Agriculture accounts for 42% of GDP in real terms, and in 2005 approximately 90% of the economically active population was employed in the primary sector. The Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project (KWAMP) as well as others projects, are a first step toward the full implementation of the PSTA strategy. They will be used to ensure that the Government's program of investment in agriculture is planned in a systematic and coordinated manner and in consistency with long-term national development objectives. The Support Project for the Strategic Transformation of Agriculture (PAPSTA) overall objective is to increase the agricultural income and improve the nutrition of poor rural population by implementing the PSTA within the frame of innovative partnerships with stakeholders. There are six pilot zones scattered across the country within this project, one of the zone being Kirehe. So the KWAMP project falls under this broader PAPSTA project. The Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project aims to promote poor smallholders of Kirehe district to overcome their food insecurity and low agricultural incomes, to arrest land degradation and to restore soil fertility. It started in 2009 and is expected to be completed by August 2016. It will directly concern 22 500 households. The total project cost is USD 49.32 million, funded at 50% by IFAD with other stakeholders (World Food Program, German Development Services, government of Rwanda, beneficiaries, private sector partners). Despite the project inception the management of these irrigation projects in Kirehe are faced with conflict challenges among groups' leadership during the implementation of the projects.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many institutions have appreciated the importance of project stakeholder management in influencing project success. Although management of stakeholders has become critical in the public sector, the process has become more complex due to greater ethical considerations and proactive media (Harrison & Freeman, 2010). This has made many public sector entities reluctant to take up this initiative.

For instance in Rwanda irrigation project has been implemented countrywide project funding is both by GOR and donors. The project has a many stakeholders (local and international) and this in turn calls for proper stakeholder management policy to ensure that the project proceeds as planned and that all stakeholders needs are addressed for the success of the project (Mumo, 2013).

To be able to deal effectively with the multiple and complex development problems to meet the divergent and conflicting interests and needs of their complex networks of stakeholders, there is the need to

understand the stakeholder trade-offs and all challenges thereof. Lukaitis and Cybulski (2005) propose a set of stakeholder attributes for assessing potential stakeholder influence of power, legitimacy and urgency. A stakeholder can have the power to impose its will on the relationship. The power of stakeholders may arise from their ability to mobilize social and political forces, as well as from their ability to withdraw resources from the project organization (Post et al. 2002).

Stakeholder management in project initiation, project planning, project execution and project monitoring and evaluation have all been studied by numerous authors at different levels. However, the methodologies used to arrive at conclusions were varied. This study therefore focused on looking at the influence of stakeholder management in all the stages of the project cycle and came up with the strengths of relationships between stakeholder management in project initiation, project planning, project execution and project evaluation and project implementation.

Irrigation projects play an important role in the economic development worldwide which elucidates attention and interest from the governments and multinational organizations. Farmers in Rwanda are increasingly taking up small scale irrigation to increase yield. However, the nature of conflict among the leaders of the small holder's scheme comprising of leaders elected from the self-help groups by membership and not professionalism (International water Management Institute, 2012) has had an influence on the performance of irrigation projects. In addition to this, small holders' irrigation projects are managed through self-help groups or project teams that are established along sector lines with no training background on irrigation.

An example engagement of Warren Buffet in irrigation projects dubbed Howard Buffett Foundation in Kirehe District has been a project with challenges. According to Buffet they were focusing on supporting the irrigation projects but stakeholder management and resource mobilization among stakeholders of the projects have been a challenge. In light of this, the research study strives to establish the factors that influence of stakeholder management on implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe irrigation projects and therefore fill in that gap.

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the study was to establish the influence of stakeholders' management on implementation of irrigation projects at Kirehe District.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The following specific objectives guided the study:

1. To establish the influence of beneficiaries' community management on the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District.
2. To determine the influence of employee's management in the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District.
3. To assess the influence of donors' management in the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District.
4. To determine the influence of supplier's management in the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions for the study are:

1. What is the influence of beneficiaries' community management on the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District?
2. How does employees' management influence the implementation irrigation projects in Kirehe District?
3. In what ways does donors' management influence the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District?
4. How do supplier's management in the implementation of irrigation projects in Kirehe District?

2.0 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework discusses the interrelationships between study variables. Conceptual framework is a schematic presentation which identifies the variables that when put together explain the issue of concern (Peters, Elmendorf, Kandola & Chellaraj, 2000). It is a set of broad ideas used to explain the relationship between the independent variables (factors) and the dependent variables (outcome) (Coulthard, 2004).The conceptual framework assesses how the independent variable namely Beneficiaries' community management, Donor management and Government regulations management on implementation of the following irrigation projects. The variables and their relationship are shown in the figure 2.1 below

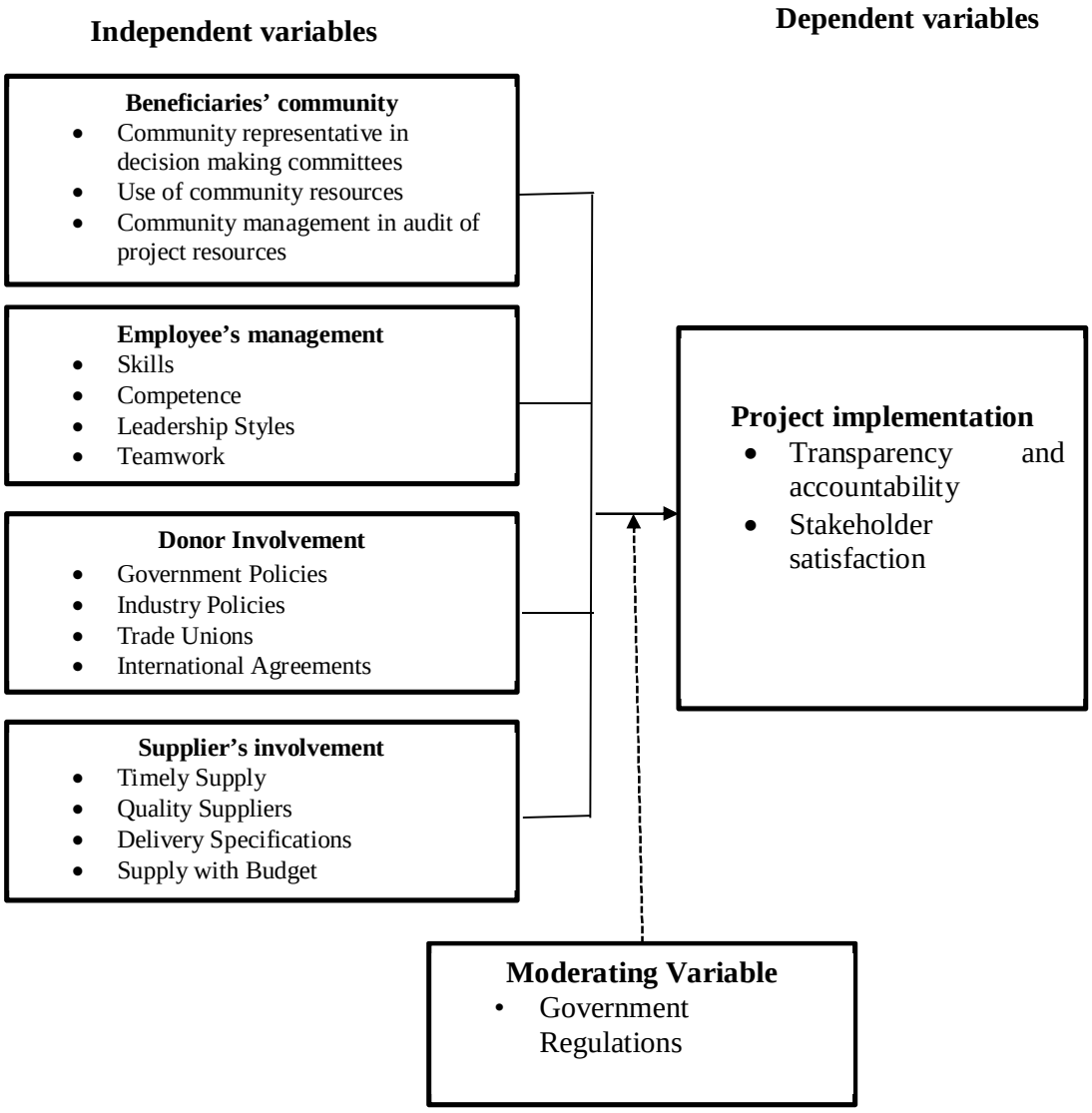

Figure 5: Conceptual framework

3.0 Research design

This research used descriptive research design. Descriptive design is normally used when collecting information about people's attitudes, habits, or opinions on the issues under study (Heppner *et al* 2008). This research design was preferred because it would bring about deeper insights and better understanding of the perceived effect of conflict management in implementation of projects in Rwanda. It adopted a case study survey. A case study involves careful and complete observation and analysis of auditing its relationship to any other unit in the group (Kothari,2004). A survey designs associated with a guided and quick collection, analysis, and interpretation of observation (Mugenda& Mugenda, 1999).

3.3 Target population

According to Cooper and Schindler (2008), a population is a well-defined set of people, services, elements, and events, group of things or households that are being investigated. There are several irrigation projects in Rwanda however; the researcher carried out a research on Kirehe irrigation projects as a case study. The population of study targeted by the researcher comprised of 180 stakeholders of irrigation projects in Kirehe district in Rwanda. By population the researcher means complete census of the sampling frames. The population of interest in this study is homogeneous everyone has equal chance to be included in the final sample that is drawn.

Table 7 Target population

Area of Operation	**Population**
Community beneficiaries' management	14
Employees	136
Donors	2
Suppliers	26
Total	**180**

4.0 Regression analysis

The researcher also conducted a multiple regression analysis to ascertain the influence of the various stakeholders on project implementation. The study results are shown in the subsequent sections.

Table 8: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.782[a]	.616	.6141	.45864

a. Predictors: (Constant), Independent variables

As shown in Table 2, the value of R was 0.785 whereas the value of R square was 0.616. The standard error of the estimate was 0.45864. This implies that 61.6% of the changes in the dependent variable (project implementation) were attributed to the independent variables in the study.

Table 9: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	83.075	4	20.768	61.26	.014[a]
	Residual	21.052	2	.339		
	Total	104.127	66			
b. Dependent Variable: project implementation						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Independent variables						

The probability value of 0.014 indicates that the regression relationship was highly significant in predicting how the two independent variables (employees and community beneficiaries' management) on implementation of projects in the agriculture industry. The F critical at 5% level of significance was 1.96. Since F calculated 61.26 is greater than the F critical (value = 1.96) this shows that the overall model was significant

The Co-efficient results in Table 3 shows the regression coefficients from all the independent variables used in the study.

Table 10: Coefficient results

Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	0.483	3.613		4.147	.000
	Community management	.205	.320	2.149	13.14	.021
	Employees management	.179	.281	1.248	7.149	.004
	Donor Management	.254	.017	1.075	3.159	.010
	Supplier management	.266	.240	.230	.850	.000

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

Y = 0.483 + .205 X1 + 0.179 X2 + 0.254X3 + 0.266 X4

The findings showed that holding all the independent variables constant at zero, project implementation increased by 0.483. However, a unit increment in employees' involvement while holding all other factors constant led to 0.205 increments in project implementation. A unit increment in community` involvement taking all other factors constant at zero led to an increment of 0.179 with regards to project implementation. These findings indicate that stakeholders' involvement have a positive influence on project implementation. Employees had the greatest influence on project implementation followed by community beneficiaries. The influence of all these stakeholders was positive as indicated by the positive beta co-efficient.

5.0. Conclusions

From the findings, it can be concluded that stakeholders have an imperative influence on project implementation since they are affected in one way or another by such intended projects. The researcher concluded that all stakeholders ought to be readily involved in project design, implementation, evaluation and enhancement. This will ensure that such projects are accepted by these stakeholders without showing any dysfunctional behavior that may seriously impede their success. Projects are formulated by senior management, but implementation is left to subordinates at all departments of the organization. This subordinated ought to be enlightened through training so that they can execute project tasks diligently. Training of the personnel who are mandated with the responsibility of project implementation will ensure that projects achieve their desired output. Employee skill and expertise is therefore critical to successful project implementation.

The study also concludes that KWAMP have had no wrangles with regulatory authorities over the last five years though the firm has had numerous wrangles with labor bodies with issues regarding staff remuneration which led to various labor strikes due to pay issues that had remained unsolved with the employees.

The study further concludes that that the top management of organization was committed to supply delivery specifications and cost issues. Suppliers were able to participate during product design/service delivery discussions and that the top management was committed to implement the implementation strategy in the organization. The study results showed that the involvement of various stakeholders influence the implementation of projects at KWAMP. The study therefore was successful in showing that indeed stakeholder's involvement is crucial to successful project implementation.

5.1. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made with reference to the study findings.

1. Firms ought to ensure that their employees are competitively remunerated to avoid labor strikes and squabbles with labor unions that lead to strikes. Content employees are satisfied hence motivated to work better hence working towards the realization of project goals. Organizations cannot achieve their desired project output if they do not have adequate human resource. Firms should therefore effectively manage their human resource in order to realize organizational success.
2. Additionally, firms ought to readily involve the community in project development and evaluation so that significant changes in customers` tastes and preferences can be addressed. This will ensure that these projects are implemented in line with current vision 2020 demands thus ensuring their ultimate success.
3. The study further recommends that if the firms are to benefit from project implementation, it ought to consult relevant authorities to ensure that such projects are not terminated hence leading to losses. This will also serve to ensure that firms are in good working relations with relevant authorities hence creating aconducive work environment.
4. The study recommends that an implementation of appropriate measures to develop the benefits that come with supplier performance and other cost saving opportunities requires fine-tuned balancing of all variables, for example, too much emphasis on the price and delivery schedule might hamper the development of the supplier's product and process quality. As the study shows, supplier evaluation is not concerned with a single set of homogenous activities. Instead, the evaluation of a supplier and its performance involves several activities representing various perspectives that lead to complex results and require different skills. Therefore, KWAMP need to further explore the relationship among the various combinations of evaluation procedures.

5.2. Areas for further research

This study was carried out with a case of KWAMP in Kirehe District. The research primarily focused on the influence of stakeholder's involvement on implementation of projects in irrigation projects. Future studies ought to be done by investigating the specific inherent factors and attributes that lead to project failure in the agriculture projects. Future assessment on the extent of staff training and expertise ought to be carried out so as to determine the extent that employee capabilities influences project implementation. Their behavior with regards to acquired skills could also be an item for future research.

The researcher recommends that future studies can investigate the influence of organizational resources and facilities on project implementation. This will enable apprehend how inadequate resources are an impediment to successful project implementation.

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