
CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

This paper explores critical success factors in the implementation of community based projects in kiambu county, Kenya. Most of the community based projects experience major hurdles in their life cycle and barely overcome the implementation stage. This study specific investigated how Community participation, management of funds, institutional capacity and monitoring and evaluation influence successful implementation of community based projects. The researcher a descriptive survey design followed by stratified random sampling technique to segment the project strata's of the targeted a population of 141 community based projects. He further used purposive and simple random sampling techniques to zero in to the key respondents of 86 CBP leaders. This paper concludes that community participation, management of funds, institutional capacity and monitoring and evaluation of the projects positively influence the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County. The recommends that there is a need to actively involve the community members in the actual planning of the project, practicing financial record keeping and proper budgeting, allocate capacity building resources to the members and project managers and finally enhance monitoring and evaluation while implementing a Community based project.

Keywords: Community participation, management of funds, institutional capacity, monitoring and evaluation, implementation.

Background of the study

Community based projects are regarded as strong forces for social and political change that fill the gaps between those who have and those who don't have in the community and are the much needed vehicle which the poor and marginalized members of society will use in order to attain financial independence. Usually started when a group of few motivated persons within the community sit together with a common aim of looking for a way their community could react to challenges and chances (Wanjohi, 2013). Most projects in the rural areas consist mainly of low cadre people in terms of income and hence face extreme challenges when it comes to managing their projects, limiting them from achieving their objective of providing their services.

The main objective of community based projects they are economical in nature, designed to create some sort of economic autonomy for the men and women and create facilitating environment for their social transformation. Successful implementation of a project can be perceived as including four fundamental aspects. A project is basically regarded as successfully implemented in the event that it is completed as per the stipulated time (time criterion), in line

with the budget set (monetary criterion), meets the purpose to the community (effectiveness criterion), and ends up being accepted and utilized by the recipients for whom it was intended or meant for (client satisfaction criterion) (Wamalwa & James, 2018)

Mutua (2014) findings revealed that participation of the community is vital and has significant impact on the implementation of community based projects. The community influences administrative structures as they provide labour and share in cost and other resources. Tshitangoniet *al*, (2010) found out that transparency, continuous funding and faithfulness of members of management team are regarded as success factors. Additionally, he documents that these projects are impacted negatively by lack of basic business practices such as book keeping, poor records and lack of training on business management skills. Further, Kothari (2004) alludes that monitoring and evaluation brings about transparency and accountability of the resources to the stakeholders such as the donors, project beneficiaries and the larger community in the process of implementation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are many funded community based projects in Kiambu County as highlighted by the government reports (GoK, 2014; Ministry of Health, 2014; GoK, 2013) that range from; food security projects, health projects, water projects and educational projects. Despite all the efforts from the various development partners, most of the community based projects experience major hurdles in their life cycle and barely overcome the implementation stage. Kiambu County is still faced by persistent food insecurity and limited clean drinking water among other challenges in the rural communities. The implemented projects in the area under study are on the decline and other are struggling for their survival in order to support jobs created by the projects. Successful implementation of such projects has therefore not been achieved, (Kamau, 2014).

After an extensive study` of the struggling project in Kiambu County, there are several factors whose knowledge need to be unearthed to ensure that the funded CBP successfully go through the implementation phase to completion. These factors include community participation, management of funds, institutional capacity and project monitoring and evaluation. In this regard, the study sought to evaluate the critical success factors in the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County through the following research objectives:

- i. To establish the extent to which community participation influences implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County
- ii. To investigate the extent to which management of funds influence implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County.
- iii. To assess the influence of institutional capacity on implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County
- iv. To determine the extent to which project monitoring and evaluation influences implementation of Community based projects in Kiambu County.

2.0 Literature Review

The idea of community-based projects (CBP) was invented from the community development movement during colonial period 40 years ago in Asian and African parts. Community development was a way of bettering local welfare, taking people through local administration and widening government control through local self-help activities, as per the colonial administrators (Mc Common, 2013). Today, it has developed as one of the major models of development especially related to grassroots community development initiatives and viewed as a basis for project success. According to Wanjohi (2013), community based projects have greatly increased in Kenya with their total number being around 50,000 contributing directly or indirectly towards the economic development of rural areas.

Phillip *et al* (2008) explains project implementation as planning, visioning, deciding, evaluating and executing the conclusions logically. Putting into consideration the independence on the nature of projects, practicing the wide range of activities requires more time than planning because it involves many external challenges (Abraham 2006). As noted by Asian Development Bank (2010), key factors affecting the implementation of the projects successfully are categorized into four: funding, management of funds, community participation, institutional capacity and effective project monitoring.

2.1 Community Participation and Project Implementation

Community participation is one of the active processes where the beneficiaries have impact in the directions that lead to the execution of development projects instead of just receiving the shares of project benefits. Being an empowerment instrument, community participation is regarded to as equitable sharing of power between the higher level and the weaker groups, to reap fruits of development and particularly create political awareness and strengths. The main aim of any development activities is to empower the community to be able to initiate own actions and influencing the processes and results (Word Bank, 2004).

The community should be empowered to evaluate their needs in line with resources readily available and being able to decide the type of the project to solve their challenges. If the community is therefore not involved at the various project levels, chances of it not owning the project may render its operational capacity unattainable (Mulwa, 2008). Local community participation is very critical in any project to guarantee successful implementation. It ensures that at the initial stages the road map is clearly set since foreseen obstacles can be given adequate provisions and thus the implementation process follows a smooth flow, (Wamalwa and James, 2018)

2.2 Management of Funds and Project Implementation

Planning, budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, disbursement and the physical performance of the project are brought together by financial management with the aim of managing project resources correctly towards achieving development goals (World bank, 1999). It is further indicated in the report that financial management is a critical ingredient in the success of any

project success. Wamalwa and James (2018) observed that comprehensive project financial management give crucial information that are required by those mandated to manage, implement and supervise projects ranging from government agencies and financial institutions. All the concerned parties need to be supplied with satisfying information about the efficient use of the donated and contributed funds and that the funds have been used to serve the intended purpose without fraud or corruption. Additionally, financial management provides internal control and the ability to quickly identify unusual occurrences and deviations (Mulwa, 2008).

2.3 Institutional Capacity and Project Implementation

Josephine (2014) while looking at staff training on project management concluded that, to a very large extent, training influenced management of project funds. This is in agreement with Taylor, (2006) who argues that organizations have been selective on whom they choose to put in the project management pool, and ensuring that these people have the requisite skills, training and experience. He further recommends that a project manager must have a strong, active, and continuous interest in teaching, training, and developing subordinates. Obisi (2011) notes that some organizations may divert funds designated for training which is deemed as expensive hence channelling the money to other seem important activities.

Daniel (2013) was among other objective investigating how training within the community influences sustainability of CSO projects in Kiambu County. He recommends that training for community service officers they still need tailor-made training so that they can understand and internalize project management skills which are essential in project management. Training should be commenced at the right time and be carried out throughout the project in order to improve the prospects and avoid task repetition. Training must also be repeated on the courses of the project implementation stage in case the officers are transferred or are on leave (Sabatini, 2002).

2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Implementation

The aims of monitoring and evaluation during implementation is to measure the progress of activities using indicators normally linked to quality or quantity in a particular timeframe, emphasizing on which activities are to be carried out, providing information whenever a particular problem arises and suggests modifications, empowering managers to provide decision about how the resources are supposed to be allocated, identifying training as well as supervision needed, Adam (2006). The frequency of monitoring can be reduced after the establishment and thriving of the project. Items to be monitored are supposed to be reduced to a smaller manageable number that will give useful information for the project's pilot that will not require more work-force, time and project's money (Sabatini, 2002).

2.5 Theoretical Review

The study was underpinned on stakeholder theory, financial distress theory and social evaluation theory.

2.5.1 Stakeholder Theory

It is important to involve community members in community projects since they form part of stakeholders from the start. As stated in stakeholders' theory, (Donaldson and Preston, 1995) argues that every member or a group taking part in the activities of organization or a firm are after enjoying the benefits and that their interests are not prioritized to self-evident but the theory pays equal attention to both internal and external stakeholders including managers, employees, financiers, owners, suppliers, governments, community and special groups of the same interest. The economic values added through enlistment of voluntary contributions, community members develop skills which triggers and creates opportunities for employment; hence adding on community wealth as the residents have the chance to advance their skills and networks that are required to address social exclusion, Donaldson (2001).

2.5.2 Financial Distress Theory

The decline in firm's the performance is characterized in this theory together with value and failure; this is according to Meredith and Mantel (1995). The performance of projects that are supposed to provide profits to the organizations should be in line with expectations. This theory is important when addressing financial challenges affecting the successful implementation of community based projects. The understanding of vital role played by the management of funds in the implementation of community based projects is well guided by this theory (Moningka, 2000).

2.5.3 Program Evaluation theory

Program Theory, developed by Pettigrew (1967) as quoted in Stufflebeam and Shin field (2007) include plans in the organization that deals with how to collect, configure and distribute resources and how to arrange for the program activities so that the implied service system is developed and maintained, Mbera, et al (2016). Donaldson (2001) further defines the theory as the process by which mechanisms are assumed to impact results and the conditions under which the entire mechanism is believed to operate. Monitoring is guided by the program theory which points out the key program elements and express how the referred elements are expected to relate to one another (Yin, 2004).

3.0 Methodology

In order to explore the critical success factors in the implementation of Kiambu County community projects, descriptive survey design was used. This is a method of gathering information by interviewing and administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003, and Kothari, 2004). To determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons of interests to the research the researcher used descriptive survey. The process by which research units of targeted population are chosen is referred to as sampling. A

sample size of 30% was used in this study of the target population resulting to a sample of 43 CBPs. This is in accordance to the recommendation of using at least 10-30% of the study sample size (Magenta and Magenta, 2003).A Purposive sampling techniques was further used to select the individual respondents. It's a non-probability technique where the sample to be studied is deliberately selected by the researcher, (Wadalba & James, 2018). From the total of 43 projects, two leaders were selected from each, making a total of 86 participants.

Statistical package for social science (SPSS V.20) was used to analyze the collected data encompassing a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Descriptive statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation were used with the aim of providing response to the formulated research questions thus meeting the research objectives. This helped to draw inferences over factors that influenced the dependent variables.

Additionally, in order to determine the relative importance of every variable contained in the study with respect to implementation of CBPs, multivariate regression model used. Applied regression model was as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Community Participation and Implementation of CBPs

To analyze the extent at which community participation influences Implementation of Community Based Projects, Project ownership, resource mobilization and Project planning were measured.

Indicators of community participation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Project ownership	4.456	0.726
Resource Mobilization	4.421	1.075
Project Planning	4.354	1.118

Source: Researcher Data (2017)

The high mean score of 4.456 under project ownership is in agreement to the research done by Khan (2000); which stated that project ownership greatly influence the process of project implementation and in the unlikely event that the implantation strategy is not working. For a

project to be implemented successfully at the right time enough resources must be availed; this calls for resources mobilization, hence the mean of 4.421 under resources mobilization. Project planning process is crucial in the implementation of a project and this can be achieved after a proper evaluation of the project to be implemented. The need for a structured decision making Project Planning in project implementation is seen by the mean of 4.354 and is in line with theoretical expectations (Stufflebeam and Shin field, 2007).

The study found that community participation influences the implementation of CBPs to a very great extent. Project ownership, resource mobilization and project planning greatly helps community project managers implement the projects and hence increases implementation success of the projects.

4.1.2 Management of Funds and Implementation of CBPs

Community projects brings a wide range of people together and as indicated by Tshitangoni et al, (2014), funds need to be mobilized and disbursed for the success of a community based project.

The demand to disburse funds can be seen from the mean of 4.125. Budgeting ensures that an organization's resources are properly managed for greater output. Budgeting makes implementation of a project efficient as indicated by a mean of 4.546; this can also be verified theoretically, World Bank, (1999). Financial recording as predicted by Josephine, (2014), have a significant impact in community based projects.

Indicators of Management of fundsand implementation of community based projects

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Budgeting	4.546	1.014
Records	4.606	0.632
Disbursements	4.125	0.756

Source: Research Data (2017)

Financial record keeping, proper budgeting, fund mobilization and having the signatory of the projects bank accounts have a great influence on the implementation of community based projects. Budgeting also ensures that an organization's resources are properly managed for greater output, hence, making implementation of a project. The financial records which is significant in making the operation of the organization transparent was also found to greatly influence the implementation of CBPs. This transparency gives donors confidence in the organization and this makes them, donate more to the success of the projects implementation.

4.1.3 Institutional Capacity and the Implementation of Community Based Projects

The influence of budgeting, policies and procedures, and facilities and equipment in implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County was established.

Indicators of Institutional capacity

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Budgeting	4.667	1.225
Policies and procedures	4.556	1.333
Facilities and equipment	4.525	1.080

Source: Research Data (2017)

Policies and procedures substantially influence the implementation of CBPs; and this can be observed from the data taken from organizations. The mean of the budgeting, policies and procedures range between 4.667 and 4.556. The respondents reported that facility and equipment influences community based projects to a great extent as indicated by a mean score of 4.525.

Education level of the staff improves managerial skills of individuals; excellent managerial skills are translated on the way a project is handled. Good managerial skills policies and procedures are what make a project achieve its objectives at the right time, within the budget, within the scope and solve the intended problem. (Taylor, 2006).

4.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Based Projects

The research examined the effects of monitoring and evaluation on the accuracy in accounting, time factor, communicating of results and monitoring schedule.

Indicators of Monitoring and evaluation on Implementation of community based projects

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Accuracy in accounting	4.400	0.547
Time factor	4.308	1.286
Communicating of Results	4.2978	1.09756
Monitoring schedule	4.2809	0.65508

Source: Research Data (2017)

The respondents reported that accuracy in accounting is greatly influenced by monitoring and evaluation; this can be seen from the high mean of 4.400. Time factor was also reported to have a strong dependence on monitoring and evaluation; this can be witnessed from the mean of 4.308, Further, respondents also reported a significant influence of monitoring and evaluation on communicating of results and monitoring schedule which showed a mean of 4.2978 and 4.2809 respectively.

Monitoring and evaluation are the key aspects in ensuring that an organization's operations are transparent both to the public and the stakeholders. The high mean in accuracy in accounting is according to the research done by Kothari, (2014), which stated that organizations must be monitored and continually evaluated for proper management of funds. Time is a scarce resource and must be managed well. By continuously monitoring and evaluating operations of an organization, the managers can know how to save and use time economically.

4.2 Regression Analysis

The study conducted a multiple regression to examine the critical factors in the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.809	0.655	0.632	0.160

Source: Research Data (2017)

The adjusted R² was used to show the predictive power of the model which is found to be 0.632 inferring that 63.2% of the variations in implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County are explained by community participation, Management of funds, monitoring and evaluation and Institutional capacity as suggested by other research works, Bravura, (2010). This shows that there are other factors not included in this research but contributes 36.8% of the relationship between the independent variables (community participation, management of funds, monitoring and evaluation and institutional capacity) and the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County, Kenya.

4.3 ANOVA results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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	Regression	3.041	4	0.760	28.438	2.89E-13
1	Residual	1.604	60	0.027		
	Total	4.645	64			

Source: Research Data (2017)

From the ANOVA statistics in table 4.7, the probability value of 2.89E-13 which is less than 0.005 indicates that the regression model predicatively showed how community participation, Management of funds, and monitoring and evaluation and Institutional capacity influenced the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County. That is, there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables (community participation, Management of funds, monitoring and evaluation and institutional capacity).

4.4 Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.672	0.516		3.240	1.95E-03
Community participation	0.703	0.223	0.146	3.152	2.53E-03
Management of funds	0.643	0.191	0.126	3.366	1.33E-03
Monitoring and evaluation	0.847	0.274	0.045	3.091	3.02E-03
Institutional capacity	0.496	0.157	0.142	3.159	2.48E-03

Source: Research Data (2017)

The established model for the study was:

$$Y = 1.672 + 0.703 X_1 + 0.643 X_2 + 0.847 X_3 + 0.496 X_4$$

Where:

Y = Implementation

X₁= Community Participation

X₂= Management of Funds

X₃= Institutional Capacity

X₄= Monitoring and Evaluation

The equation of regression shows that by incorporating all factors into account (community participation, Management of funds, and monitoring and evaluation and Institutional capacity) constant at zero implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County was 1.672. According to the study, a unit increase in the community participation, management of funds, monitoring and evaluation, Institutional capacity translates to a 0.703, 0.643, 0.847 & 0.496 respectively increase in the scores of implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County; all other independent variables held constant.

That then means a single increase in mean by one brings a change that is significant hence denotes that community participation, management of funds, monitoring and evaluation, Institutional capacity is necessary for successful implementation of community based projects in Kiambu county. This is because whenever the co-efficient is equal to zero, then it means that there is no effect in the predictor variable.

Overall, monitoring and evaluation had the greatest effect on the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County, followed by community participation, and then Management of funds while Institutional capacity had the least effect to the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County. Therefore then all the variables under study were significant ($p < 0.05$) implying that the positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable are not by chance. Hence need to incorporate these variables in implementing successful projects.

5.0 Summary

This study investigated the critical success factors in the implementation of community based projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. The problem being the efforts from the various development partners, to the community based projects experience major hurdles in their life cycle and barely overcome the implementation stage. Hence the study endeavoured to find out if Community participation, management of funds, institutional capacity and monitoring and evaluation influenced successful implementation of community based projects.

The study found that community participation influences the implementation of CBPs and that monitoring and control influences the implementation of community based projects to a very great extent. Further the study deduced that management of funds is a key recipe for successful implementation of CBPs and that funds need to be mobilized for the success of a community based project which is an indicator that the data is in line with the theoretical expectation. Education level, good managerial skills of the staff improves managerial skills of individuals; making a project achieve its objectives resolving that institutional capacity is a major influence on the implementation of community based projects. Monitoring and evaluation was found to be a key aspects in ensuring that an organization's operations are transparent, accurate and that time is used economically hence an important influence in CBPs implementation

The target population was the 141 community based projects and employed a descriptive survey design followed by stratified random sampling technique to segment the project strata. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were further employed to zero in to the key respondents of 86 CBP leaders. The data was edited, coded, classified and then analysed using descriptive analysis in order to answer the research questions and objectives. This was with the help of Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and Ms Excel.

5.1 Conclusion

From analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that project ownership greatly influences the process of project implementation in most community based projects. People who own projects are after enjoying the benefits of a project hence fast tracking on implementation. Enough resources too must be availed for the project to meet its demands on technology establishment and advancement, labour, capital, organization structures, societal support and legitimacy. Management of funds includes Planning, budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, disbursement and the physical performance of the project having an aim of managing project resources correctly towards achieving desired goals. Additionally financial records help in making the operation of the organization transparent; the transparency gives donors confidence in the organization and this makes them, (donors), donate more to the success of the project implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation had the highest mean thus suggestive then that it is both necessary and sufficient for the successful implementation of community based projects. For effective monitoring and evaluation process, some critical factors that need to be taken into account includes sound methods in time factoring, transparency in accounting accuracy and adequate resources, communicating results appropriately and finally having a schedule for monitoring activities. Institutional capacity is where training influences management of project funds and organizations been selective on whom they choose to put in the project management pools; people who have the requisite skills, training and experience. Good policies and procedures too are what make a project achieve its objectives at the right time, within the budget, within the scope and solve the intended problems.

5.2 Recommendations

Community participation in community based projects have a great influence on the implementation of CBPs. Being that these projects are to benefit the community members, their participation is crucial as it increases implementation success of community based projects. Project leaders should therefore ensure that community members' involvement in CBPs to remove any aspersion that may derail the success of such projects. Fund management on the other hand is critical in every stage of the project. This indicator was found to be necessary for the successful implementation of CBPs. In the findings, project managers should encourage financial record keeping practices, proper budgeting for transparency and accountability during the entire project phase. The study also recommends that the project managers and other key stakeholders should be empowered to ensure they fully understand the project requirements. Training regarding project management skills can further make a project achieve its objectives at the right time, within the budget, within the scope and solve the intended problem. To enhance the project ownership, transparency and accountability of community based projects; project managers should conduct project monitoring and evaluation at every stage of the project. Monitoring and Evaluation had the highest mean score hence presupposing that it is both necessary and sufficiently needed for the successful implementation of CBPs.

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