

The Influence of Project Planning on Performance of Compassion Kenya (CKE)-Assisted Holistic Child Development Projects in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract: Projects exist to meet a specific need and Compassion Kenya-assisted holistic child development projects are among such projects whose intent is to liberate children and youth from their economic, spiritual, physical and socio-emotional poverty. Success of these projects depends on a number of factors such as planning, communications, employee competence and risk management. How these factors influence project performance is an area that has not been explored before and as such formed a basis for this study. This study sought to investigate the influence of project planning on the performance of Compassion Kenya-assisted Holistic Child Development projects in Nairobi City County. The study used descriptive research design to describe factors and variables in the study. A census of the 21 Compassion Kenya (CKE)-assisted Holistic Child Development (HCD) projects in Nairobi City County was carried out. Primary data was gathered by use of structured questionnaires which was processed by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Research findings were presented in percentages and tables. Study findings revealed that Planning positively and significantly correlated with performance of Compassion Kenya-assisted HCD projects in Nairobi City County. According to the findings of this study the HCD projects conducted project planning but excluded other stakeholders in decision making. The same had hindered performance of the projects. The study recommended that all stakeholders in the HCD projects be involved in the planning process and their ideas considered valuable by the managers in decision making regardless of their position in the projects. The vision, mission and objectives of the HCD projects should be well explained to all stakeholders so that they all flow in sync.

Keywords: Project Planning, Project Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Project performance is viewed differently by different managers depending on their experience, knowledge and context they work in. Globally, project performance includes and not limited to client acceptance, reputation of the company, team work, business strategy among many (Bonghez & Gregarious, 2013) Success indicators could be tangible like a large number of projects being well managed ensuring they are within budget and time allocated as well as contribute to a global strategy or non-tangible like satisfying customers (Ofori, Baiden and Badu, 2016). Other criteria for measuring success include effective communications,

increased collaborations, stakeholder involvement among many (Khan, 2016).

Since projects are unique endeavors intended to meet specific objectives within a definite schedule of time, scope and performance parameters, it is very critical that performance is assessed and measured regularly (Project Management Guide, 2013). Globally, performance measurement tools are used by organizations to better understand project successes as well as failures in the past. With such understanding, plans for future improvements and development can be made (Vleems, 2018). Project success is also an area of interest considering the relationship between attaining the objectives of a particular project and the long-term development of an organization. This is because organizations carry out projects as part of their implementation strategies such that the success of the projects mean business or organization success and vice versa (Beleiu & Nistor, 2015)

Alqahtani, Chinyio, Mushatat and Oloky (2015) came up with a framework indicating factors that affects performance and outputs of projects. Three main factors were identified to affect performance of projects, that is, the culture of the organization, culture of project management and the manager of the project. The culture of the organization includes aspects such as values and norms. Aspects about project management culture include strategic emphasis and top management support whereas aspects about the project manager include competence, self-sufficiency, skills etc.

Since projects are complex and diverse in nature, a definition of what success is by project managers is important in achieving it. Defining the criteria for success in the earlier stages of a project is important because success could mean different things for different people. For instance, for some project teams, timeline, budget cost, scope of the project and the quality of work could be important while for senior managers in the same project; success would be the ability of a project to contribute to the general company objective. Success to a client of the same project could mean ability of the client to meet their commitments with other stakeholders as well as customers (Khan, 2016).

Project planning involves a series of steps that determine how to achieve a particular project goal or set of related project goals which can be identified in a strategic project plan. Good

project planning is critical to project success (Watanabe & Senoo, 2013). Therefore, planning should therefore be at the heart of successful project management. According to Pinto and Slevin (2015) project planning practice helps the project managers think ahead and prepare for the future, clarify goals and develop a vision, identify issues that will need to be addressed, choose between options and consider whether a project is possible make the best use of resources.

Holistic Child Development is a way to think about how children grow, gain knowledge as well as develop in their earlier stages of life. It includes activities that mold the young person as a whole and not in part and is different for all depending on the ecology surrounding the child. That ecology includes the adults, other children, the environment, social-economic realities, culture and many more parts. Holistic Child Development allows for an expanded and in-depth working with children since they are looked at as complete beings that are evolving (Fletcher, 2014). It has different aspects running in sequence where development at a lower level acts as a basis of performance on the next level (Naudeau, Kataoka, Valerio, Neuman, & Elder, 2011).

Nairobi City County has 21 Compassion Kenya-assisted projects spread across the county. The east side of the county has 14 HCD projects while the west side of the county has 7 HCD projects. Each Implementing Church Partner (ICP) is required to have a customized vision, mission and objective for its existence. These are borrowed from the Compassion Kenya vision, mission and objective. Project activities are planned to holistically meet existing needs of beneficiaries in the specific ICPs. The ICPs are also expected to oversee the running of the projects through a select team of members that form the Church Partner Committee (CPC). Project monthly activity and finance reports are submitted to Compassion Kenya (Compassion International, 2017)

Compassion International Kenya, implements a Holistic age graded curriculum covering four domains, that is, spiritual, cognitive, socio-emotional and physical (Compassion International Kenya, 2013). One of the metrics for measuring success of the projects is based on attainment of specific outcomes in the individual domains by beneficiaries. Another metric is partnership maturity which assesses attainment of specific outcomes by implementing church partners like project ownership (Compassion International Kenya, 2017). In a study on determinants of Compassion International funded Income Generating Activities' (IGA) performance, Wairimu (2010) noted that 50% of all the IGAs fail within the first year of operation.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Project performance is a vital component when defining success of a given project. In so doing, based on set standards for determining success, a number of indicators are used in determining performance (Khan, 2016). Project performance is important not only because it is solving a particular issue but because it reflects on overall organization success and

growth (Serrador, 2015). Project success greatly depends on the implementation process as much as on the planning and preparation process, yet a lot of research has been majorly on project preparation and not the implementation process (Charan, 2006). It was also established by Hrebiniak (2015) that without effective project implementation, then there cannot be project success. It is therefore a matter of importance to understand how aspects about project implementation influence overall project success.

A study by Lemma (2014) examined the role of project planning on project performance in Ethiopia and the finding identifies the main problem areas in planning processes as risk, scope, quality human resource, and integration knowledge areas were inadequately or poorly performed in the studied project. Serrador (2017) study evaluated the importance of the project planning on project performance and revealed a strong link between planning and project performance. Naeem, Khanzada, Mubashir and Sohail (2018) study examined the impact of project planning on project performance and found that project planning is positively associated with the project performance. From the studies conducted, there is little if any indication that aspects of project planning with regard to performance of CKE-assisted HCD projects in Nairobi City County have been studied. This study filled the research gap by establishing the influence of project planning on performance of Compassion Kenya-assisted Holistic Child Development Projects in Nairobi City County.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This study will be based on systems theory by Morris (1996). System theory advocates that all organizational components be interrelated and integrated. According to Morris (1996) systems theory classifies systems as open or closed depending on the presence or absence respectively of the systems interaction with the surrounding environment. Morris (1996) describes an open system as one that interacts with its environment, the larger system of which it is apart. The interaction represents the exchange of energy or information. The model used to describe an open system theory as input-process-output, with a feedback loop from the environment into the system information received from the output and then a feedback to the input.

This theory suggests that by understanding, what the project is trying to achieve, how and why, project staff and evaluators will be able to monitor and measure the desired results. Projects are complex and dynamic in nature. Each part of the system does influence the whole system in its unique way. Project planning plays an essential role in helping guide stakeholders, sponsors, teams, and the project manager through other project phases. Therefore, this theory is relevant to the study because planning is needed to identify desired goals, reduce risks, avoid missed deadlines, and ultimately deliver the agreed product, service or result.

Empirical Review

Al-Hajj and Zraunig (2018) study investigated the impact of project planning on the successful completion of construction projects in Pakistan. Quantitative data was collected in a survey via a web-based questionnaire, featuring 20 Questions sent to 142 selected project managers. Participants were selected based on their background, geographical location and their employment position. The study revealed that the majority of successful projects implement, but do not fully utilize contemporary project management tools and techniques to their capabilities. The influence of project management tools and techniques on project success depends on the practitioners' training, the timing and level of implementation achieved, whereas the human factor plays an essential part for achieving project success.

A study by Tesfaye, Lemma, Berhan and Beshah (2017) assessed key project planning processes affecting project performance. The study was based on data obtained from different construction projects performed in Ethiopia and includes an analysis on statistical correlation between planning input factors and planning processes, and between planning processes and project success. The study used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to identify the key determining factors of project planning on success. The finding suggested that planning processes are insensitive to human factor. Moreover, only three project planning processes (time, cost and risk) were found to be positively associated with the project success.

Umulisa, Mbabazize and Shukla (2015) study examined the effects of project planning practices on project performance of Agaseke Project in Kigali, Rwanda. The research design to this study employed a Cross-sectional study design that uses both quantitative approach. The target population of the study was all women who are members of Agaseke Project in the city of Kigali. Purposive sampling technique was employed for a target group of 400. The sample size of the research was 120 respondents. Questionnaire was used in order to collect primary quantitative data with a focus group discussion in-depth interview guide would be used to collect qualitative data. Correlation analysis between financial resource planning practices and project performance indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between budgeting, forecasting, plans for money generation and project performance.

Nzioka (2017) study investigated the role of project planning on project performance in Kenya: A Case of Kenya Power Infrastructure Development Projects. The study adopted a census survey to collect data from all the project managers. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Quantitative data analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyze the data collected. Regression results revealed that there exist a weak positive and statistically significant relationship between quality planning and project performance.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design to describe factors and variables in the study. A census of the 21 Compassion Kenya (CKE)-assisted Holistic Child Development (HCD) projects in Nairobi City County was carried out. Primary data was gathered by use of structured questionnaires which was processed by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Research findings were presented in percentages and tables.

V. FINDINGS

The study sought to establish the influence of project planning on performance of Compassion Kenya (CKE)-assisted holistic child development projects in Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Project Planning and Project Performance

Project planning	Mean	Std. deviation
The project has a clearly defined vision, mission and objectives	4.43	1.33
The project vision, mission and objectives are well understood by all stakeholders.	3.53	1.30
All project activities are in line with the vision, mission and objectives	4.31	0.93
The project has a working budget plan	4.39	0.66
The project budget is well implemented and any variances are in acceptable limits	4.70	0.58
Financial reporting is accurate and detailed	4.80	0.28
All stakeholders (staff, management, beneficiaries and caregivers) are involved in the planning process	2.11	1.43
The project has clearly defined roles for all staff and units	4.00	1.04
The project has clearly defined working policy and operating procedures	3.92	0.85
Project activities are implemented and reported within set timelines.	3.70	0.75
Average mean	3.98	

Source: Survey Data, (2019)

Findings indicate that majority of the respondents at an average mean of 3.98, agree with most of the statements about project planning which is indicative of planning as a key aspect in the implementation of Compassion Kenya-assisted HCD projects in Nairobi City County. Majority of the respondents agree with the statements that the projects have accurate and detailed financial reporting, budgets that are well implemented and variances that are kept within acceptable limits, clearly defined vision, mission and objectives, a working budget plan and that all project activities are in line with the project vision, mission and objectives. They also agreed to the statement that the project has clearly defined roles for all staff and units. This is reflective with the mean of 4.80, 4.70, 4.43, 4.39, 4.31 and 4.00 respectively.

Majority of the respondents neutrally agreed with the statements that projects have clearly defined working policy

and operating procedures, project activities are implemented and reported within set timelines and the project vision, mission and objectives are well understood by all stakeholders. This is illustrated by the mean of 3.92, 3.70 and 3.53 respectively. A large section of the respondents disagreed with the statement that all stakeholders (staff, management, beneficiaries and caregivers) are involved in the planning process. This illustration therefore implies that there is low involvement in the planning process of the projects by stakeholders. The findings agree with Serrador (2015) literature review which concluded that a larger number of studies agree that planning is critical to the success of a project.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that project planning helps Compassion Kenya-assisted HCD employees to focus on the objectives and the end goal. Having a project plan helps the project manager and the project team members plan milestones, determine how much time they require, and schedule their tasks accordingly. Thorough project planning includes performing a full assessment of all the potential risk factors allowing the project managers to develop a contingency plan that can be used to avoid issues like resource shortages, reallocation of budget, and scope creep. A plan also allows project managers to keep track on which resources have been allocated and thus avoid over-allocation. A project plan shows project managers which tasks have dependencies, and allows them to be scheduled accordingly. Planning facilitates communication, which will help project team members to know what exactly is required of them.

The study recommended that the organization should consider organizational factors such as top management support, client consultation, and client acceptance during project planning phase. It should consider what people, tools and techniques will be used in the project management process, the way in which the work will be executed in terms of how, when, where, by whom and with what resources in order to reach the project's objectives and also technical requirements such as performance, reliability, and availability that the project must be met in order to proceed with a project that must be considered to successfully complete a project.

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