

Effect of Stakeholders' Participation on Sustainability of Community Projects in Ruhango District, Rwanda

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Abstract: Stakeholders' participation is a major concern in this modern global economy whenever it comes to the sustainability of community development projects. The international community is constantly pushing the less developed world to engage community members in deliberations concerning problems that impact their well-being. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of stakeholders' participation on sustainability of community projects in Rwanda. The study was anchored on sustainability and stakeholder theory. The study adopted descriptive research design with the sample size 401 participants. The results revealed that passive participation and interactive participation had a positive and significant relationship on sustainability of community projects ($\beta = 0.739$; $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.194$; $p < 0.05$). Thus, the study concluded that predictor variables positively and significantly affect sustainability of community projects. Stakeholder participation is a vital activity as it ensures that every member of the project is part of the decision making. The study recommends the community projects needs to increase the extent of extent of passive participation amongst the stakeholders as this will yield better sustainability outcomes. Also there is need to enhance the extent of interactive participation with the stakeholders' to strengthen their capacities in project management hence greater sustainability for projects success.

Keywords: Project Sustainability, Stakeholders' participation, Passive Participation, Interactive Participation, and stakeholder theory

I. INTRODUCTION

In this new global economy, stakeholder' participation is increasingly becoming a part of project practice in order to deliver excellent project outcomes (Karlsen, *et al.*, 2008). A well-managed stakeholder engagement process helps the project stakeholder to work together to increase comfort and quality of life, while decreasing negative environmental impacts and increasing the economic sustainability of the project. Stakeholder engagement should therefore be taken as a core element of any sustainable development plan (Bal *et al.*, 2013). According to Lyons *et al.*, (2001) project sustainability refers to the ability of the project to continue with its intended impacts either after community or beneficiary take over or withdrawal of the donor support. Local participation is seen as one of solutions to the problem of project sustainability. Not only would participatory approaches assist project sustainability but it is also argued that participation would make projects more efficient and effective (McGee *et al.*, 2002).

Stakeholders' participation is a major concern regarding the sustainability of community development projects, and that the international community continuously pushes the less developed world to engage community members in discussing issues that affect their well-being. The World Bank and the United Nations emphatically state that the development agencies have a crucial role in promoting community involvement approaches, specifically the bottom-up approach is crucial for project performance and sustainability Balet *et al.*, (2013). The approach is preferred to the top-bottom approach because it facilitates implementation and makes the community members feel that they are part of the project and own the process. It is believed that participation would lead to empowerment through capacity-building, skills, and training Lyons *et al.*, (2001). Stakeholder participation should, therefore, be adopted a core ingredient in any sustainable development project (Nyandika & Ngugi, 2014). It is crucial for governments and international agencies that implement community projects, and can adopt different participation approaches to ensure that they succeed in their project goals.

People should be involved from the planning initial of community projects. Participation is the main and active tool to get people's views and important inputs which are necessary to make community project more effective and efficient (World Bank, 2019). Stakeholders' participation has demonstrated as main tool for achieve excellent project outcomes a per the current global economy development (Swastika *et al.*, 2005). According to World Bank, (2019) stakeholder participation is the way at which projects stakeholders get right to contribute and influence as well as share control on development initiatives and all aspects which could affect project outcomes. Development experience over the last few decades and the increased concern of international funding agencies and non-profit organizations in social sector have made stakeholder' involvement an inevitable part of the development process.

To fight against poverty, world countries have initiated home gown solutions programs and success is measured based on the observed changes occurred in people's living conditions within the country (Musabyimana, 2019). From 2006 the beneficiaries were families meeting the conditions such as family without any owned cow or raising cow of the others, family which have cow feeding capacity, family which have house for the cow and the family which has a good conduct in Rwandan localities (MINAGRI, 2020; Hahirwa &

Karinganire, 2017). The community project consists of giving cows to poor families in a bid to eradicate malnutrition through milk consumption, increasing crop productivity and household incomes through milk sales. The program which consisted by cow donation was targeting to handle food security issues for people across the country sides. The aim of this aspect of community projects is to equip families with the animal husbandry skills to care for the cow themselves. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect of stakeholders' participation on sustainability of community projects in Ruhango District, Rwanda.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Review

Sustainability theory emphasizes on maintaining the desirable aspects of natural and/or social conditions and, when possible, improving such conditions, including the status of natural resources. Sustainability can be focused on an ecosystem or biodiversity status, for example with or without explicit attention to human well-being or may be focused on a specific aspect of a human system such as educational equity, or even the financial health of an individual farm (Waas *et al.*, 2011). In sum, the pursuit of sustainability is oriented toward long-term consideration of economic resources, human resource and environmental resources in ways that are consistent with human well-being and dynamic system stability (Khalili, 2011). Based on the sustainability theory, it means that sustainability is an ability or achievement and consistency in keeping positive changes. This study intended to evaluate whether sustainability of community projects was getting useful outcomes resulted from the nature at which program was implemented. In other case once the cow outcomes was not capable to remove beneficiaries from poverty conditions, the program outcomes could not be ranked sustainable.

Stakeholders' theory is a managerial concept of organizational strategy and ethics (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman & Evan, 1990). This theory posits that active stakeholder' participation in any development project is very essential and supportive to the beneficiary community. Without community participation it is not possible to determine what are the problems, constraints, and local desires for a given community. According to Harvey and Reed (2007), participation of project beneficiaries" is of great essence in that it boosts the sense of ownership among members. This is important in ensuring that projects are operated and maintained after the implementation phase. Community participation is attained through collaborative or joint involvement of project beneficiaries and the implementing agencies (Khawaja, 2004). In this research, stakeholder participation at all levels is very critical in achieving sustainability of community projects.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Passive participation on sustainability of community Project

Passive participation implies participation as a contribution to the implementation of a project without any control over the resources and decision-making. In passive participation, the external agents have assumed their role as teaching the participants the solutions to their problems (Yahia & Gonzalez-Aguilar, 1998) The interest of the external agents is only to legitimize their existence in the project without any intention to really involve the participants (Cornwall, 2008). Passive participation allows the community members to assume a full role of looking for solutions to their problems. External agents implements projects without necessarily having any control over decision-making and resources. Their tasks are reduced to teaching the community members appropriate ways to look for solutions to their own problems (Ochunga & Awiti, 2017). The intention of the external players is to legitimize their participation in the project while the community members charge of receiving and paying attention to suggestions the external agencies propose.

With passive participation, communities participate by being communicated taken decisions of the activities which are being in plans. The information belongs only to external professionals. (Ochunga & Awiti, 2017) studied role of Participation of stakeholders on sustainability of community projects, by Plan International in Kenya. Study results showed that there was a moderate significant positive correlation between the influences of maximum participation of stakeholders' on sustainability of community projects. As studied by Emmanuel (2020) on the stakeholder participation of Donor Funded Projects in Rwanda. The statistical findings were found to be positive and significant.

H₀₁: Passive participation no significant effect on sustainability of community Project.

Interactive participation on sustainability of community Project

According to Lennie (2005), participatory evaluation methodologies are considered to produce many positive and empowering impacts. Interactive participation allows people to take part in joint analysis, designing action plans, and strengthening local institutions (Chifamba, 2013). The process makes participation viewed as a right and not a mere means to attain project goals. It involves interdisciplinary methodologies that adopt multiple perspectives, systematic, and structured learning approaches to produce positive and empowering influences which improve performance and sustainability of community development projects.

Interactive participation is applied, where people get involved in group analysis, action plan, and in formation of institutional pillars. Ndekha *et al.*, (2003) assessed community participation as an interactive learning process. Study results confirm that if community participation is well ensured solutions are easy to fund for all projects challenges. Wasilwa (2008), studied significance of participation on project sustainability in East Java-Indonesia and the project mostly targeted the poor, and marginalized people (vulnerable

people). However, some high school graduates and wealthy villagers were also included as target beneficiaries. Most participants were actively involved and participated in the project implementation activities, but rarely participated in project planning and design as well as monitoring and evaluation. The outcomes of the study have enumerated the beneficiary’s responsibilities, education, skills and personnel ability as factors influencing stakeholder’s participation.

H₀₂: Interactive participation no significant effect on sustainability of community Project.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design which is concerned with finding out what, where and how of a phenomenon. The study population constitutes 11,925 beneficiaries and sample size comprised 401 participants. Five point likert scale close ended structured questionnaire were used as a data collection instrument while inferential statistics were used to draw inferences from the data. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied in the study to test the formulated hypotheses and expressed as;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \epsilon$$

Where,

Y = Sustainability of Community Projects

X₁= Passive participation

X₂= Interactive participation

β₀= Constant

β₁-β₂ = Coefficient of estimates

ε = Error tem

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Correlation results

Statistical findings in Table 1 revealed that there was a positive and significant correlation between passive participation and project sustainability (r = 0.315, p<0.01). More so, the correlation between interactive participation and project sustainability had a positive and significant relationship at (r =0.216, p<0.01). Therefore, it can be concluded that the passive participation and interactive participation are positively correlated to sustainability of community projects at 5% level of significance.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix

	Sustainability of Community Projects	Passive participation	Interactive participation
Sustainability of Community Projects	1		
Passive participation	0.315**	1	
Interactive participation	0.216**	0.187**	1

** Correlation significant 1% (2-tailed). * Correlation significant 5% (2-tailed).

Testing of the study Hypothesis

The statistical findings in table 2 revealed that there is presence of the association between the variables (R² = 0.382) implying that the combined prediction of the two predictor variables accounted for approximately 38.2% of the total variation on sustainability of community projects. The model was fit in predicting the contribution between the study variables which was statistically significant at 0.05 level of confidence (F = 22.791; p<0.05).

The first hypothesis stated that passive participation has no significant effect sustainability of community projects. The study findings exhibited that passive participation had a positive influence which was statistically significant (β = 0.739; p<0.05) hence passive participation had a positive and significant effect on sustainability of community projects. This therefore implies that a unit change in passive participation increases sustainability of community projects by 0.739 units. The findings are in line with the results of (David, 2017; Ochunga & Awiti, 2017; Chifamba, 2013; Masanyiwa and Kinyashi, 2008) positive and significant connection between passive participation and sustainability of community projects. However, the results are in contrast with the findings of Golicha (2010) who found no significant relationship between passive participation and sustainability of community projects.

The second hypothesis stated that interactive participation has no significant effect sustainability of community projects. Results showed that there was a positive and significant effect on interactive participation and sustainability of community projects (β = 0.194; p<0.05). This implies that a unit change in interactive participation enhances sustainability of community projects by 0.085 units. The findings are in line with the results of (Wasilwa, 2008; Lennie, 2005) who found a positive and significant connection between interactive participation and sustainability of community projects. However, the results are in contrast with the findings of Wanyama and Mutsotso, (2010) who found negative and significant relationship between interactive participation and sustainability of community projects

Table 2: Regression Coefficients, Model Summary and ANOVA

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	0.884	0.073		12.104	0.004
	Passive participation	0.901	0.143	0.739	6.300	0.005
	Interactive participation	3.090	0.351	0.194	8.803	0.009
Model Summary						
	R	0.618				
	R Square	0.382				

	F	22.791			
	Sig.	0.001			

* Significant at 0.5 level (2-tailed), ** Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of stakeholders' participation on sustainability community of projects in Ruhango District, Rwanda. The extant literature has indicated that stakeholders' participation enhances sustainability community of projects in Rwanda. The findings indicated that stakeholders' participation is a key indicator in enhancing sustainability community of projects. Given the findings, the researcher concluded that there is a strong positive link between passive participation and interactive participation sustainability community of projects.

Stakeholder participation is a vital activity as it ensures that every member of the project feels like they are important because of their involvement in the decision making. It also ensures that all members of the project are aware of the project development and what to expect in the end, hence sustainability of the women funded project. It is important for the project managers to ensure that stakeholder examination is the first indicative device and the main step in project sustainability. It helps clarify which people and organizations are directly or indirectly involved in or affected by a specific development problem.

The study recommends the following;

- i. Foremost there is a need to increase the extent of passive participation amongst the stakeholders as this will yield better sustainability outcomes.
- ii. Secondly, there is need to enhance the extent of interactive participation with its stakeholders' as this will function to strengthen their capacities in project management hence greater sustainability for it projects success.

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