

Investigating ways in which monitoring and evaluation sustain donor-funded projects at Machakos County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate ways in which monitoring and evaluation sustain donor-funded projects at Machakos County, Kenya. A descriptive study design was selected for this investigation. Further, the targeted population was 867, consisting of officers from diverse funding agencies, leaders from funded projects, beneficiaries, along with committee members. A stratified random sampling method was exploited to pick 90 participants for this investigation. Furthermore, a structured survey form was employed in gathering data from the interviewee, and these survey forms were purely administered by the researcher and were picked daily. With the aid of SPSS version 25, gathered data were coded, edited, as well as analysed using descriptive along with inferential investigation. The summarised data was displayed in form of percentages together with frequencies. All the research ethics were followed throughout the investigation. This investigation established that majority of the project activities were monitored at each execution stage. This assessment concludes that all project undertakings were monitored at each execution stage, and these activities involved all the stakeholders. The study established that monitoring, as well as evaluation, plays a paramount role in strengthening the permanence of the donor financed projects by use of regular feedback information that can pinpoint the progress challenges and then come up with solutions. The examination thus suggests that all the project participants should be engaged in carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities during the project life cycle in order to guarantee the sustainability of the donor-financed projects.

Key terms: Donor-financed, participants, stakeholders, transparency, World Bank.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, Togbolo (2005) posts that donors, particularly NGOs, are continually escalating in numbers due to the urge for freedom as well as democracy, which awakes the global community. Further, the author suggests that NGOs ought to stretch outwards from solid innovations together with ideas at grassroots level. These will enable them to bridge with the forces guiding patterns of poverty, selective politics, economics of omission, self-centred and violent individualist behaviour, as well as the seizure of the world of ideas, including knowledge, by the most powerful. This can only be attained through the integration of actions at the micro along with macro levels to support disadvantaged societies. Even though many donors Ali (2011) face financial challenges, they have shown the capability of reaching the most vulnerable populations as well as working in very inaccessible and remote places. Still, these organisations have embraced innovation besides delivering improved services when compared to government agencies. The author further indicates that these organisations largely supplement the efforts of other agencies and, thus, enhance transparency, accountability, and participation in the development process. Limited financing, as highlighted by this author, is the main factor, which has also been noted by several other authors as the paramount reason for failure in projects.

The viability of interventions sponsored by the donors is crucial in the expansion of the community together with the continued enjoyment of project benefits. All over the world, funds from donors are ever increasing even though the sustainability of the benefits is not assured. The expectation of freedom, including democracy, in the international community is connected to project development. Donors assimilate macro and micro measures in their initiatives in order to assist disadvantaged societies in spite of their scarce resources. Limited funds thus may lead to limited maintenance, and in the end, it causes the failure of a venture.

Furthermore, foreign policy, together with political considerations, are fundamental in a few projects. For instance, Africa required \$1.9 billion yearly to bring down the case of Malaria halfway. However, by the year 2002, donors had raised only \$200 million.

According to the World Bank, poor governance results in about 38 per cent of projects. Poor answerability by governments along with the implementing partners hinders the sustainability of the benefits of an intervention. In that respect, several projects have crumbled due to the dependability of just a single donor. The rate of failure for a few water projects in Africa, as indicated by The UN Joint Monitoring Program, is about 30 per cent to 60 per cent. Of late, donors have begun to emphasise education cost recovery as well as community mobilisation. Monitoring as a tool assists the donors to pinpoint and assess any potential bottlenecks and thus come up with mitigation steps to guarantee the success of an intervention. The existing literature indicates some cracks since a few studies have been done outside Machakos County, Kenya. This has resulted in limited along with non-updated literature. Thus, the inspiration for this assessment was apparent because of the cracks identified.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nyonje et al. (2012) define monitoring as a continuous as well as periodic review of a project to verify whether the inputs, schedules of work and output, together with other operations, are going on as captured in a project plan. Evaluation, on the other hand, seeks to find out, systematically and objectively, the worth of a project, policy, or strategy. The evaluation findings need to be credible enough to affect decision-making by partner organisations regarding the lessons that are learned. Further, the evaluation ought to attain a balanced analysis, reconcile views and find any bias by utilising diverse sources for it to be objective (Guijti, 1999). Society's contribution in evaluation as well as monitoring can be viewed as the combined analysis of an intervention by the stakeholders, considering the benefits of embracing the grassroots perspectives in a project life cycle (Gitonga, 2012).

Sustainability, as well as the effectiveness of participatory monitoring and evaluation, demands its reinforcement in a pure commitment towards improving actions by societies, managers of a project, along with other key stakeholders who can act (Hodgkin, 1994). Further, the project indicators need to be monitored so that the societies keep carrying out sufficient monitoring and evaluation of donor-

financed interventions. These indicators ought to be agreed upon during the baseline survey to reassure us that measures are executed when required. All beneficiaries should be engaged in monitoring along with evaluation so that they can have an opportunity of deciding the criterion of success which will be adopted. Further, evaluation should be adopted as a management tool for identifying any bottlenecks and came up with an action plan for continuity.

Monitoring, as pointed out by Karanja (2013), assists the managers in identifying as well as assessing any potential drawbacks and accomplishment of an intervention together with equipping the basis for making either substantive or operational adjustments to improve the planning of an intervention, its execution as well as the quality of results. This, according to the author, reinforces the initial results. Thus, the sustainability of an intervention is determined using monitoring. As indicated by Standish Group Project Report (2005), among the main reasons for project failure is the absence or limited project monitoring along with control. Success, including sustaining a project, generally relies on the continuous feedback mechanism regarding the ongoing activities of an intervention (Mark et al., 2000).

Most of the projects managed by youths in Kangema District, Murang'a County, Kenya, as mentioned by

Gitonga (2012), were evaluated just twice per year. On the other hand, 23 per cent had never seen the li evaluated. This led to the author's conclusion that monitoring and evaluation are critical for projects to be sustainable, including their frequency in the project phases. Monitoring Karanja (2013) assists project managers in identifying and assigning likely bottlenecks and achievements of a project/program and thus providing a starting point for corrective actions to enhance the project design and implementation along with the quality of the goals.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Donor-financed projects need to be regularly monitored and evaluated along with the follow-up on the already completed projects to determine whether their intended goal is still being achieved long after it has been handed over to the beneficiaries.

The participants were asked to choose their level of concurrence with statements focusing on monitoring and evaluation. These statements were captured in a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where SA- Strongly Agree (5), A-Agree (4), N-neutral (3), D-Disagree (2), and SD-Strongly Disagree (1). The mean score (M), as well as the standard deviation (STDEV) of the respondents, were calculated. Table 1 shows the results of this objective.

Table 1: Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation on Sustainability of Donor-Funded Projects in Machakos County, Kenya

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	ST DEV
At each execution stage, all project activities are monitored.	60.5%	19.7%	12.8%	4.2%	2.8%	4.3	1.0
Monitoring and evaluation activities involve all stakeholders.	43.7%	23.9%	7.0%	11.3%	14.1%	3.7	1.4
Monitoring and evaluation is essential in the continuity of donor-financed projects.	47.9%	26.8%	18.3%	5.6%	1.4%	4.1	0.9

During planning for monitoring and evaluation, local grassroots engagement, including views, is captured.	40.9%	50.7%	2.8%	4.2%	1.4%	4.2	0.8
Monitoring and evaluation assist stakeholders to pinpoint the bottlenecks and then come up with solutions.	80.3%	5.6%	8.5%	1.4%	4.2%	4.5	1.0
There is regular feedback monitoring and evaluation information focusing on the project's progress.	43.7%	36.6%	9.9%	7.0%	2.8%	4.1	1.0
Stakeholders, as well as beneficiaries, continue carrying out monitoring and evaluation after the project is done.	15.5%	22.5%	9.9%	39.4%	12.7	2.9	1.3

The results in Table 1 indicate the responses to the statements that assessed the effect of monitoring along with evaluation on the sustainability of donor-financed projects in Machakos County, Kenya. The first statement requested the participants to select the level of agreement on whether all the projects' activities are monitored at each level of execution. From the information collected, the majority of the participants, 60.5 per cent were in strong agreement with this statement, 19.7 per cent agreed with this very statement, 12.8 per cent indicated neutral in line with this statement, 4.2 per cent disagreed with this statement, while the minority 2.8 per cent were in a strong disagreement along the same statement. The mean for this statement was 4.3, while the standard deviation was 1.0. This result stipulates that almost all the project activities are monitored at every part of the execution. This finding agrees with Lewis (2009), who pointed out that implementers of donor-financed projects are ever engaged in monitoring along with evaluation of their projects.

The second statement sought to determine if monitoring plus evaluation activities involve all the

stakeholders. From above Table 1, 43.7 per cent of interviewees strongly agreed in line with this opinion, 23.9 per cent agreed with the very opinion, 7 per cent indicated neutral, 11.3 per cent disagreed with the assertion, and 14.1 per cent strongly disagreed in line with this assertion. The mean score was 3.7, while the standard deviation was 1.4. This result indicates that; several stakeholders take part in monitoring and evaluation activities. This is in line with the views of Gitonga (2012), who feels that society's contribution in evaluation, as well as monitoring, is a combined analysis of intervention by these stakeholders, considering the benefits of embracing the grassroots perspectives in a project life cycle. On the contrary, the above results do not concur with the study results by Nyaguthii and Oyugi (2013), who noted that there was limited participation of the grassroots individuals, particularly in the monitoring together with evaluation.

The next statement desired to determine whether monitoring, as well as evaluation, is essential for the viability of donor-financed projects. From Table 1, 47.9

per cent of participants strongly agreed, 26.8 per cent concurred, 18.3 per cent indicated neutral, 5.6 per cent disagreed, and a further 1.4 per cent were strongly in disagreement with this assertion. The average for the statement, including the standard deviation, were 4.1 and 0.9 independently. This shows that monitoring, as well as evaluation, is fundamental to the viability of donor-financed ventures.

Further, from Table 1, the participants were requested to indicate whether local grassroots engagement, including views, is captured during planning for monitoring along with evaluation. From the analysis, 40.9 per cent of the informants strongly agreed, 50.7 per cent agreed, 2.8 per cent indicated neutral, 4.2 per cent disagreed, and lastly, 1.4 per cent strongly disagreed. Further, the mean score and the standard deviation were 4.2 and 0.8 apart. These findings imply that the opinions of local grassroots members are included when planning for monitoring along with evaluation.

In addition, the informants were solicited to tick their extent of concurrence on whether monitoring along with evaluation assists stakeholders in pinpointing the bottlenecks and then coming up with solutions. From the analysis, almost all the respondents, 80.3 per cent, were strongly in agreement with the assertion, 5.6 per cent agreed, 8.5 per cent indicated neutral, 1.4 per cent disagreed, and lastly, 4.2 per cent strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean, as well as the standard deviation, were 4.5 and 1.0, respectively. Thus, these results indicate that monitoring along with evaluation enables the key stakeholders to identify the project challenges. This result reinforces the findings by Karanja (2013), who revealed that monitoring assists the managers in identifying together with assessing any potential issues and accomplishment of a project along with equipping the basis for making changes necessary for planning, executing, including the quality of a project. Thus, from this observation, monitoring along with evaluation assists the project stakeholders in detecting the project bottlenecks and then, these partners come up with solutions that will rectify the challenges facing their project.

Again, from Table 1, the interviewees were solicited to indicate the extent of concurrence on how often they

receive feedback monitoring together with evaluation information focusing on the progression of the venture. In this statement, most of the informants 43.7 per cent strongly agreed with it, 36.6 per cent agreed, 9.9 per cent indicated neutral, 7.0 per cent disagreed, and lastly, 2.8 per cent strongly in disagreement with this assertion. The mean score was 4.1, and at the same time, the standard deviation was 1.0. This computation shows that project participants get adequate feedback information from the project. These findings were like the views posted by Mark et al. (2000), who observed that success, including the sustainability of a project, generally relies on the continuous feedback mechanism regarding the ongoing activities of an intervention.

Finally, the informants were asked to rate their declaration on whether the stakeholders, as well as beneficiaries, continue carrying out monitoring along with evaluation after the project is executed. The descriptive results revealed that 15.5 per cent were in strong agreement with the declaration, 22.5 per cent agreed, 9.9 per cent indicated neutral, the majority 39.4 per cent disagreed with the statement, and 12.7 per cent were in strong disagreement with this assertion. In addition, the mean score for this assertion was 2.9, while the standard deviation was 1.3. These findings, therefore, imply that most of the beneficiaries, including stakeholders, do not continue to carry out monitoring and evaluation from the moment a project is completed. This can be attributed to the limited capacity of these project participants to carry out monitoring and evaluation once the project is completed.

Discussion

The first intention of this investigation focused on finding out how monitoring and evaluation sustain donor-financed projects in Machakos County, Kenya. One of the main findings after analysing and interpreting the responses regarding this objective was that there was a large involvement of the project participants in monitoring along with evaluation activities in donor-financed projects at Machakos County, Kenya, thus influencing notably the sustainability of these projects. This could be the reason as to why many of the informants, 47.9 per cent, were in strong agreement that Monitoring, along with evaluation, indeed affects the continuity of

donor-financed projects, while 26.8 per cent agreed with this assertion. In addition, this could be the reason why many of the informants, 60.5 per cent, were in strong agreement that all project undertakings are monitored at each execution level, and a further 43.7 per cent strongly agreed that monitoring and evaluation activities involve all the stakeholders. Furthermore, 40.9 per cent of the respondents strongly indicated that the local grassroots engagement, as well as views, are captured during planning for monitoring and evaluation.

Moreover, the descriptive findings reveal that almost all the respondents, 80.3 per cent, strongly agreed monitoring and evaluation assist project participants in pinpointing the bottlenecks and then coming up with solutions. The findings also indicate that the respondents receive regular feedback monitoring and evaluation information focusing on the project progress, with 43.7 per cent strongly agreeing and a further 36.6 per cent agreeing. However, the majority of the informants, 39.4 per cent, disagreed that project participants continue to carry out monitoring and evaluation after the project is completed. This could be attributed to the limited capacity to continue carrying out this process. Additional analysis using correlation analysis revealed a strong correlation between monitoring and evaluation along with the sustainability of donor-financed projects at Machakos County, Kenya. The outcomes point out that a single change in monitoring, including evaluation, could lead

to a 0.659 change in the sustainability of donor-financed projects.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions: In relation to monitoring and evaluation, this assessment concludes that all project undertakings were monitored at each execution stage, and these activities involved all the stakeholders. Furthermore, the local grassroots engagement, as well as views, were captured when planning for monitoring and evaluation activities. In addition, this assessment concludes that monitoring plus evaluation assists project participants in pinpointing the bottlenecks and then come up with solutions using regular feedback information focusing on the project's progress. In the long run, monitoring, including evaluation, will indeed affect the continuity of donor-financed projects. However, most of the project participants in Machakos County, Kenya, fail to carry out monitoring along with evaluation after the project is executed.

Recommendation: The study established that monitoring, as well as evaluation, plays a paramount role in strengthening the permanence of the donor financed projects by use of regular feedback information that can pinpoint the progress challenges and then come up with solutions. The examination thus suggests that all the project participants should be engaged in carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities during the project life cycle in order to guarantee the sustainability of the donor-financed projects.

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