
Stakeholder Participation in Needs Assessment and Sustainability of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Projects in Mount Elgon Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

Most projects are customized in project management. Hence, successful accomplishment of the projects requires stakeholder participation. Moreover, the management of stakeholder's participation in OVC projects is receiving more concentration in practice. The objective of the study was to establish the influence of stakeholder participation on sustainability of OVC projects in Mount Elgon Sub-County, Kenya. We sought to establish the influence of stakeholder participation in needs assessment on sustainability of OVC projects in Mount Elgon Sub-County, Kenya. The two grounding theories were; Freeman's stakeholder theory and resource-based theory. The study employed a descriptive survey research design with a target population of 176 and a sample size of 122 stakeholders. The study applied quantitative methods of data collection. The questionnaires were pre-coded to ease data entry. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS to obtain frequency distributions, percentages, mean and standard deviations. The study findings delineates that stakeholder participation in needs assessment is significant in influencing sustainability of OVC projects with correlation coefficients of ($r=0.623$; $P<0.000$). The study concluded that stakeholder participation in need assessment significantly influences sustainability of OVC projects. The study subsequently recommended that stakeholder participation in needs assessment should be comprehensively undertaken during implementation of OVC projects in order to enhance their sustainability.

Introduction

The project shareholders are important factors to any organization. Stakeholders have dynamic demands and roles in ensuring that any project is implemented to its logical conclusion. They provide resources, expertise, solicit support and give the project direction through project communication channels and participatory M&E. Stakeholders drive the project and are thus critically important its success and performance. (Donaldson and Preston, 2015). With proper appraisal and categorization and subsequent involvement in the project activities, stakeholders support should thus be able to outdo their related conflicts or opposition to the project in order to realize the project goals.

In Asia some scholars don't support OVCs' care by CBOs. For instance, in a study in Nepal MacLean, (2015) did argue against the upbringing of OVCs in orphanages especially those run by CBOs. He argued that CBOs lacked the necessary governance structures, exhibited poor financial management practices which in turn meant they lacked professional employees who could fulfill the psychological needs of OVC (MacLean 2015). However, Ali, *et al.*, (2014) in a rejoinder from Pakistan posits that CBOs are obligated to lay a major part in the rehabilitation of street children and the granting of educational opportunities for these children.

In Europe, while some scholars discourage the upbringing of OVCs in institutions especially due to the uncertainty associated with funding and psychological risks. Other scholars celebrate work done by these institutions such as community-based organizations (CBOs). For instance, according to Browne, *et al.*, (2016) OVC under the care of institutions such as CBOs face the risk of psychological needs because they are detached from their extended family and abuse by workers in these institutions. This view is supported by some international NGOs in Europe whose roles are to extend support to vulnerable families so that they can meet their own obligations and especially those with disabilities than institutionalizing them (Save The Children, 2013). However, Tolfree, (2013) and Tobis, (2015) did postulate that CBOs extend a key role in the welfare of vulnerable children in Europe.

In Eritrea and Benin, Menahem, *et al.*, (2014) did a comparison study on the OVC situations and did conclude that OVC were neglected because CBOs in these two countries could not afford taking care of them due to associated costs which were very high as established costs per child expenditure in Eritrea being \$1,900 and in Benin about \$1,300, monthly. This was due to limited access to sufficient donor funding because of political patronage and high costs of living in these two countries (Menahem *et al.*, 2014).

In Ghana, Zaney (2014) observed that OVC numbers were among the highest in the Western Africa region second only to Nigeria and that non-profit organizations such as CBOs though faced by challenges including; effective governance structures, and access to sufficient funding had a key role in taking care of the needs of OVC in the country. Deters and Bajaj (2013) the CBOs implemented OVC projects success in Ghana was influenced by their ability to secure funding, relationships with government agencies, and the level of community participation in the projects.

In South Africa, King *et al.*, (2013) posits that CBOs constitute 53% of the non-profit sector in the country. These CBOs provide education opportunities for OVC in collaborations with

local schools as therapeutic interventions. Such interventions have been reported to reduce cases of juvenile crimes resulting from peer pressure and contributed to the mentoring of these OVC into responsible adulthood. Other CBOs in the country have also been reported to equip OVC especially those that in early adulthood with life orientation skills (King et al., 2013).

Tiku, (2016) did observe that CBOs in Zimbabwe are faced with many bottlenecks such as political interference in their work on OVC care. This he attributes to suspicion by government officials and politicians who view these organizations as vehicles of political competitions used by their rivals. However, Chitiyo, *et al.*, (2013) in a study in Zimbabwe did postulate that CBOs in the country have provided education opportunities for OVC a situation that has created psychological healing for the OVC.

Ethiopia neglects most of its OVC and the government does not offer support in form of social workers and bursaries to CBOs supporting OVC (Chernet, 2015). This creates a little sense of responsibility and low self-esteem since the children supported by these are not equipped with skills to survive on after they leave care under the CBOs. This view was supported by Abebe and Aase (2013) who observed that Ethiopia lacked a well-structured social network that would take care of the high number of OVC in the country. In Tanzania McAlpine et al., (2013) did posit that CBO's initiatives to reduce sexual abuse cases among street children were adversely influenced by limited funding. They further observed that the continued sexual abuse among children and associated child rights abuses such as sexual abuse and child labor in Northern Tanzania led to influx of the street children. In Uganda, Samson, (2010) did observe that CBOs faced numerous challenges such as political interference and insecurity during implementation of projects targeting OVC resulting from the war in the Northern part of the country. These challenges did negatively influence the successful implementation of CBOs' projects targeting OVC. Omwa and Titeca (2011) posit that albeit faced with challenges such as low community participation, insecurity and limited funding, interventions implemented by community CBOs for OVC care were successful.

In Kenya, Ferguson and Heidemann, (2013) did posit that CBOs were working hand in hand with NGOs to provide care for OVC participatory approaches would not only enhance project sustainability but also efficiency and effectiveness would be enhanced through participation (Guo, 2005). Beginning 1980s, failure in development assistance had been bridged through stakeholder participation, though it was till the 1990s where multilateral partners including the World Bank started to emphasize on the need for stakeholder participation in order to entrench sustainability in development (Gonzales, 1998). Today stakeholder participation in development projects is an initiative highly regarded in promoting sustainability of development initiatives and is mainly undertaken through community empowerment and capacity building (Bhattacharya, & Shah, 2008).

Mt. Elgon Sub-County according to National AIDS Programme report (2020) has a high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of above 8% and is one of the poorest in Kenya based on the development index. This rate averages double the national prevalence rate figures therefore this has given rise to overtly OVC numbers. The sub-county has also bore the brunt of intertribal clashes leading to deaths and displacements of people due to political tensions and thus leading to

proliferations of OVC. As the OVC numbers increase there is need to redefine the approaches of programs taking care of children made vulnerable and those orphaned by HIV. USAID 4TheChild is a five years USAID funded OVC project working in Mount Elgon region and the entire Bungoma County supporting OVCs. The project works with community structures including CBOs with its implementation being guided by PEPFAR. Guidance for OVC Programming (2012), COP20 Guidance, National Policy for Children (2010), Kenya National Children Action Plan (2015-2022), and Kenya Minimum Quality Service Standards for OVC (2015), among other policy documents and guidelines. The other CBOs taking care of OVC in Mt Elgon Sub County include Socially Organized Educative Team, Bukonoi Sama and Empower Hope CBOs.

Statement of the Problem

Most OVC projects initiated by CBOs operating in Mt. Elgon Sub county face one major challenge: unsustainability resulting from insufficient funding. The financial inadequacy is perpetrated by overstretched resources, little to no tax waivers, and gaps in coordination between CBOs and major non-profits in the sphere. As such, most OVC projects implemented by CBOs risk failure, increasing socioeconomic vulnerabilities of the targeted beneficiaries. The vulnerabilities include but not limited to not access to education, healthcare, prevalence of food insecurity, poverty, influx of street families, child sexual abuse, molestation, and child labour.

Presently, there are 17 CBOs in Mt. Elgon Sub-county, 12 of which are non-operational leaving only 5 functional. It is posited that lack of active partners' participation and comprehensive coordination among stakeholders contribute to unsustainability.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Two theories anchor this study outlined as Stakeholder theory linked to the predictor variable and resource-based theory linked to the dependent variable.

Stakeholder Theory

The theory was propounded in 1984 by Edward Freeman. Other proponents of the theory include Thomas Donaldson, Clarkson, Milton Friedman and Craig McDonald among others. It states that organizations that manage the affairs of their stakeholders are likely to survive longer in a competitive enterprise environment. Proper application of stakeholder theory leads to enhanced interrelationships between the enterprise and the enterprises' stakeholders, (Preston, and Donaldson, 1995).

The theory's relevance to this study is that it facilitates the identification and appraisal of key OVC Projects stakeholders. It also facilitated profiling them into various categories based on their roles as either primary or secondary stakeholders. The theory was also crucial in identifying the interrelationships between various stakeholder and the undertaking community based social work and development programmes. It is thus believed that with this theory, the stakeholders are able to establish good collaborative relationships and forge good partnerships to mobilize resources, coordinate efforts and enhance a proper system for the implementation of OVC projects in Kenya.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The theory previously owes its roots to Penrose (1959) writings who alluded to importance of resources to an enterprise's ability to be competitive. The arguments advanced by the proponents were that resources may not only enhance a firm's competitive ability to the degree that they are employed in a manner that promotes the availability of the potentially valued services of a firm (Donaldson and Preston, 2015). They contend that resources are categorized as intangible and tangible assets with a connection semi-permanent to the firm. This paradigm focuses on the firm's internal resources significance in acquiring a competitive edge. The view of the RBV premised on the ability of a firm to effectively compete buoyed by the skills and resources. Insofar as other resource holder rationally acts, relative advantage rests with the major resource holder over the rest (Wernerfelt, 1984).

The theory discusses internal features and performance of organizations and presupposes that firms have unique strategic resources rather than identical ones. Resources are diverse because they are not entirely movable. While a firm's capabilities come from its resources, its competitive advantage mostly comes from its capabilities (Grant, 1991). The ability of a corporation to plan out its resources and employ them effectively is referred to as its capability (Hillman, Wither & Collins, 2010).

Empirical Reviews

Stakeholder Participation in Needs Assessment and Sustainability of OVC Projects

The project beneficiaries are the core target group with whom the project is implemented to benefit directly by solving their needs and alleviating their sufferings. (Carol, Cohen, and Palmer, 2014). They are therefore the project primary stakeholders. Samson (2010) evaluated needs assessment and perception in OVC projects implementation in Seme, Kisumu, Kenya. The study deployed descriptive survey design and examined OVC projects implemented by donors and how the beneficiaries were identified with regards to their degree of need and vulnerability. The findings suggest sustainability is compromised when stakeholders are not fully engaged in needs assessment. The perception of majority of the respondents also pointed towards an unsatisfactory needs assessment criterion. The study however, did clearly dwell on methodology that can be repeated for verifiability of this study by other studies.

Musyoka (2016) assess factors determining the performance of OVC project in Nakuru East Constituency Kenya. The study utilized descriptive survey, primarily applying KII schedules and questionnaire. Funding was highlighted as the major of OVC project performance and the study further reported that revenue generated by initiated portfolios was not enough to sufficiently support the project activities. The study looked at performance and did not explicitly determine how the factors influence OVC projects sustainability.

Magret (2016) undertook a study to evaluate stakeholder participation on the process of effective benefactor identification in OVC project inception and how it subsequently influences their execution. The study surveyed community OVC project in relation to participation of stakeholders in them. The results project that stakeholder identification should be an inclusive process and the

implementation, performance and after execution sustainability is dependent on recruitment of the beneficiaries. The study fell short of linking sustainability of OVC project to stakeholder participation process.

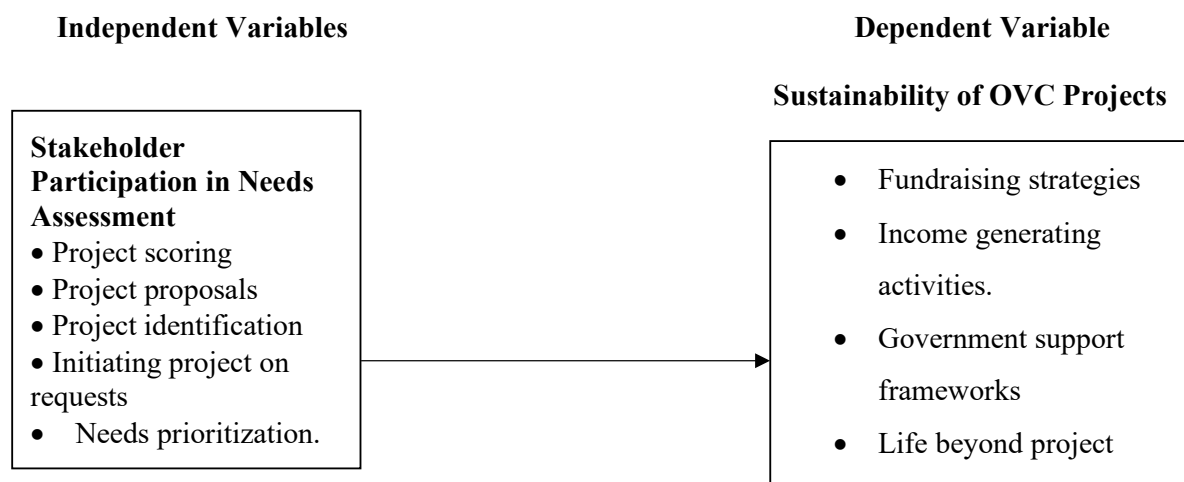


Figure 1: Conceptual Frame work

Research Method

The study used quantitative approach. The research design contrives systematic description of a situation, population, and phenomenon. and it enables the researcher to describe the dependent and independent variables accurately while also answering question of what, where, when and how in relation to the variables, (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design facilitated the investigator to gather quantitative data by use of structured questionnaires, (Orodho, 2002). The design is ideal for this study because it describes the current state of sustainability of the OVC projects in Mount Elgon Sub-County. The descriptive survey research design is suitable since it zeroed in on gathering data from respondents where the questionnaires were self-administered. they were collected for analysis quantitatively and inferences made. Descriptive survey research design is one in which a researcher tries to figure out what kind of interactions, naturally occurring variables have with each other. Simply put, descriptive survey aims to describe the current situation as it is displayed. Kothari, (2004) contends that this design provides a vivid elucidation of the characteristics of the populous or situation being studied.

Target Population

A populace is a clear-cut arrangement of individuals, components, occasions or gathering of things that are under a magnifying glass by the specialist (Ngechu, 2004). Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) portray an objective populace collectively to which the analyst expects to sum up the consequences of the examination. The selection criteria will involve scrutiny of OVC project reports in Bungoma County social programme offices to determine stakeholders currently engaged in the implementation of OVC project in Mt. Elgon. The target population is as outlined in Table 3.1

Table 1: Target population within Mount Elgon Sub-County

Particulars	Target Population
Community Health Volunteers CHVs	155
CBO Directors	3
County Director of Gender	1
County Children Coordinator	1
County Aids Control Coordinator	1
County Director of Education	1
County Registrar of Persons	1
Sub-County Coordinators for AIDs Control	2
Sub-County Children Officers	2
Sub-County Registrar of Persons	1
Child Protection volunteers (CPVs)	8
Total	176

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Sample is a part of the population that is representative and that can be used to generalize. According to Fraenkel (1993), the target population sub-set selected for observation and analysis constitutes the sample size. The Yamane (1967)'s sample size determination formula as outlined was used;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

N= Target population

n=Sample Size

e=Epsilon Naught

1 = Equation Constant

$$n = \frac{176}{1 + 176(0.0025)} = 122$$

n= 122 respondents

Instruments for Data Collection

The study gathered both the quantitative information and subjective information. Kothari (2004) takes note that surveys are more unbiased in contrast with the perception since the reactions are gathered in a normalized way and it likewise considers confidentiality. The questionnaires were administered to Community Health Volunteers CHVs, and Child Protection volunteers (CPVs).

Data Analysis and Presentation

The process through which the collected data is cleaned, corded, tabulated and appropriate statistical method used induce meaning references on the said data (McNeill, 2005). Quantitative data was edited in the field at the collection sites to ensure completeness and accuracy. Further

cleaning was done daily where the data collection tools were sorted and rechecked for completeness, edited and coded. The second phase of cleaning was done after quantitative data entry. Descriptive analysis to summarize the findings was processed using SPSS V27 from which frequencies, arithmetic mean, standard deviation and percentages were analyzed using inferential statistical analysis of correlation and regression analyses were also run on SPSS to determine Pearson's rank correlation and probability values

Results and Discussion

Questionnaire Return Rate

The achieved response rate is outlined in Table 4

Table 2: Rate of Return on Questionnaire

From the Table 4; study's sample size was 122 and that implies that 122 questionnaires were administered 122(100%) out of which 114(93.44%) were completed and collected-back for analysis giving a non-return rate of 8(6.56%). According Kothari and Gerg (2014) survey responses are always low and 50% above is a good return for meaningful analysis and thus with the study's over 90% response rate it was nothing short of excellence

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Stakeholder Participation in Needs Assessment and Sustainability of OVC Projects

Item	Statements on Stakeholder Participation in Needs Assessment	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean	S.D
B1	Project scoring is applied to determine the hierarchy of project needs	23(20.18%)	33(28.95%)	15(13.16%)	25(21.96%)	18(15.79%)	3.16	1.393
B2	Project proposals are considered based on feasibility of needs	23(20.18%)	41(35.96%)	10(8.77%)	21(18.42%)	19(16.67%)	3.25	1.405
B3	Projects are selected initiated according to requests received based on the needs	29(25.44%)	49(42.98%)	10(8.77%)	16(14.14%)	10(8.77%)	3.62	1.251
B4	Stakeholders are engaged in project initiation activities	18(15.79%)	34(29.82%)	7(6.14%)	33(28.95%)	22(19.30%)	2.94	1.416
B5	Needs prioritization is a major factor in project initiation	27(23.68%)	46(40.35%)	9(7.89%)	21(18.42%)	11(9.65%)	3.50	1.298
Composite Mean and Composite S.D							3.29	1.353

The statistical descriptive analysis results as detailed in *Table 6* describes the weighted tallies of responses between stakeholder participation in needs assessment and sustainability of OVC projects. It can be deduced that there was generally low participation of stakeholders in needs assessment leading to moderately low sustainability of OVC projects with the sub-variable having achieved mean aggregate of 3.29 and a subsequent composite S.D=1.353. The contributing statement means and S.D to the composites were as detailed here-in.

The first item established whether project scoring is applied to determine the hierarchy of project needs. The 114 weighted responses were distributed as outlined; 23(20.18%) strongly agreed, 33(28.95%) agreed, 15(13.16%) neutral, 25(21.96%) disagreed and 18(15.79%) disagreed strongly as premised by the statement. The item posted 3.16 mean and 1.393 S.D. The general weighted trends suggest that project scoring is moderately applied to determine the hierarchy of project needs.

The second item was to establish whether project proposals are considered based on feasibility of needs. The 114 weighted responses were distributed as outlined: strong agreement, 23(20.18%); agree, 41(35.96%); neutral, 10(8.77%); disagree, 21(18.42%); and strongly disagree, 19(16.67%). The item posted mean (3.25) and standard deviation (1.405). The weighted tally scores suggest that project proposals to a moderately level are considered based on feasibility of needs.

The third item was to establish whether projects selected are initiated according to need-based requests. The 114 weighted responses were distributed as outlined strongly agree, 29(25.44%); agree, 49(42.98%); neutral, 10(8.77%); disagree, 16(14.14%); and strongly disagree, 10(8.77%). The item posted mean (3.62), and SD (1.251). The weighted tally scores to a comprehensive positive opinion suggest that projects are selected and initiated according to requests received based on the needs for them.

The fourth item was to establish whether stakeholders are engaged in project initiation activities. The 114 weighted responses were distributed as outlined: strongly agree, 18(15.79%); agree, 34(29.82%); neutral, 7(6.14%); disagree, 33(28.95%); and strongly disagree, 22(19.30%). The item posted mean (2.94), and SD (1.416). The tallied weighted outcomes indicate that stakeholders are engaged in project initiation activities in a limited manner, and this definitely had a negative bearing on sustainability.

The fifth item was to establish whether needs prioritization is a major factor in project initiation. The 114 weighted responses were distributed as outlined: strongly agree, 27(23.68%); agree, 46(40.35%); neutral, 9(7.89%); disagree, 21(18.42%); and strongly disagree 11(9.65%). The item posted mean (3.50), and SD (1.298). The recorded tallied weights suggest that needs prioritization is indeed a major factor in project initiation.

Table 6: Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.623 ^a	0.388	0.383	1.075

a. Predictors: (Constant), Needs Assessment

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	82.162	1	82.162	71.3	.000 ^b
	Residual	129.461	112	1.156		
	Total	211.623	113			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability of OVC Projects

b. Predictors: (Constant), Needs Assessment

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.041	0.226		4.606	0.000
	Needs Assessment	0.641	0.076	0.623	8.431	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability of OVC Projects

Discussions

The ($R = 0.623$). Coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.623$) shows that needs assessment explains 62.30% of variation in sustainability of OVC projects while the ϵ = Error term (Epsilon) is 37.70% and were due to omitted variable bias. Based on the reported simple linear regression results analysis Stakeholder participation in needs assessment and sustainability of OVC projects have a significant distinct relationship with the value for $P < 0.000$ thus being less than $\alpha = 0.05$ and $F = 71.3$ and being > 2.5 which according to the rule of the thumb of regression models, we reject the null hypothesis as there is a significant relationship between the variables. Thus, stakeholder participation in needs assessment is significant in influencing the Sustainability of OVC projects. The results are a proof that stakeholder participation in needs assessment process, leads to

enhanced sustainability OVC Projects. Since the value $P < 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$. And with the intercept value being 1.041 and the slope coefficient value for the sub-variable being 0.641, the equation can then be constructed as $y = 1.041 + 0.641$ Needs assessment has an implication that stakeholder participation in needs assessment is contributing positively to the sustainability of OVC projects

Conclusions

The study's general objective was to establish the influence of stakeholder participation in needs assessment on Sustainability of OVC projects in Mt. Elgon Sub-County, Kenya. Empirical investigation established that stakeholder participation in needs assessment is significant in influencing sustainability of OVC projects with ($r = 0.623$; $P < 0.000$) being the coefficients of determination and composite (average) mean and S.D, are 3.29, 1.353, respectively. This implies that, a significant, and positive correlation exists between the variables.

Recommendation

There should be established modalities and frameworks for stakeholder to be compressively involved in needs assessment in order to enhance the sustainability of the OVC projects. The frameworks to anchor the inalienable right of stakeholders to participate in OVC projects should be well defined and promoted by the government as a policy.

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