FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABILITY OF DONOR FUNDED AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS IN IMENTI NORTH SUB COUNTY, MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has been a major challenge for most donor-funded projects in developing countries like Kenya as most projects usually collapse after the donor withdrawal or projects closure. Several NGOs and government agencies have implemented projects, which do not last to benefit the targeted beneficiaries long after the donor exits. Generally, the donor funded projects lack sustainability aspect, which is contributed by challenges such as lack of participatory engagement by the community, corruption, political instability among others. The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to investigate how community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff, monitoring and evaluation influenced sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County. The study was based on realistic evaluation theory, resource dependence theory and systems theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study had a total target population of 135 and the respondents were selected using stratified proportionate random sampling techniques whereby a sample size of 70 was used. The Primary data was obtained using a questionnaire that was composed of both open ended and closed ended questions. The reliability of the study instruments was measured using test retest method. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in the data analysis. Descriptive analysis such as mean, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data collected from the respondents of the study. Multiple regression analysis was employed to establish the significance of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Data representation was done through tables. The analysis of the qualitative data collected using the open-ended questions was done using the conceptual content analysis. Based on the research, the study found that involving the community during the initiation and implementation stage of the projects influences ownership of the projects hence community derives satisfaction from this leading to sustainability. The study also found out that community involvement had the greatest influence on the sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects, followed by Monitoring and Evaluation then availability of resources while training of project staff had the least effect to the sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects. The study revealed that frequency of monitoring opportunities for improving sustainability of the projects and that facilitated negotiations and identification of gaps and suggested the way forward. The study concluded that community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff and frequent monitoring and evaluation is very important for the continuity and sustainability of donor funded projects. The study recommends that there should be enhanced community participation in any donor-funded project and need to be part of the projects. The other recommendation is that resources should be

adequate especially financial resources should be increased and budgets for the projects made. It is recommended that project staff be trained in the technical aspect of the projects being undertaken to realize sustainability, this will ensure that the staff have the knowhow and the technical skills to handle agricultural donor funded projects. Capacity building and training should be fully embraced. The study also recommends that the information gained from the monitoring and evaluation should be used to guide the project managers where more planning and management is needed.

Key Words: *sustainability, donor funded agricultural projects, Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

Donor funded projects through Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) have become an important part of development internationally, nationally and locally. NGOs are known for various activities, which include delivery of essential services to people that need urgent emergency services, and advocating for changes through policy-change campaigns and civil education. There has also been increased NGO activity in an array of more specialized roles such as emergency response and preparedness campaigns, promotion of democracy and democratic practices, conflict resolution, promotion and advocacy for human rights, recognition and preservation of cultures and heritage, sensitization of population towards climate change and its effect, analysis of local and international policies, promoting availability of information to the public (Rosenberg et al., 2008).

(Sarriot et al., 2004) Confirms that NGOs are constrained by limited financial resources and period hence unlikely challengers of many developments in the societies. Through years of change and evolution the importance and purposes of Non-governmental Organizations remains almost unchanged: provision of services and assistance to individuals and populations in need. In many instances, NGOs have proven to be more capable and willing to reach out and work with poor people, work in remote and general y inaccessible areas, and provide services that the local governments have been unable or unwilling to provide. Although NGOs are usually working towards the similar goals, the approaches they use differ sometimes. For example, some offer members of the local communities membership in the organizations to facilitate service delivery and alleviation of suffering. Other NGOs prefer to offer services through skilled participatory approaches. The resources provided by NGOs are also often additional; designed to complement the efforts made by other governmental or non-governmental organizations. The additional input promotes accountability and transparency, and more inclusive public participation. The involvement of NGO's also helps to mitigate the effects of failures in the original projects initiated by either public or private entities.

Over the years, Non-governmental Organizations have also established themselves as essential partners in the representation and advancement of civilization and modernism. As politically

non-partisan entities, NGOs have also been able to set up their involvement in social issues and projects in such a way that they are viewed as more legitimate than government agencies. Recent decades have seen continual and consistent increase in the number of NGOs and this development can largely be linked to the global aspiration and advocacy for freedom , human rights and democracy in the modern international society. The modern global democratization and interlinked economies are more inclined towards the input of both local and international public opinion and NGOs have been very active in mobilizing for higher levels of public participation (Mulandi, 2013)

According to (Backstrand, 2006) stakeholder democracy after the Global World Summit, explained that NGOs must learn to build outwards and upwards by initiating their development innovations, ideas, and agendas right at the grassroots community level. The projects can then grow and develop to connect with powerful entities with more influential involvement in creating and sustaining patterns and trend of poverty such as exclusionary and discriminatory politics and economic approaches, unwarranted and unprovoked violence which have led to the elites' disproportionate capture of the world's resources, wealth, and knowledge. The aforementioned is what NGOs seek to address through integration of communities and local leadership at the micro and macro levels of their project and activities, which are intended to support vulnerable communities.

There has been increased funds donated to both government agencies and NGOs in Africa to support programs aimed at reducing but it has been observed that poverty levels are on the rise (Busiinge, 2010). The study critiques projects that have or are in the process of being implemented through donor funding and the socioeconomic impact that they have had on the target communities vis a vis the intended purpose. It also recommends strategies that can be utilized going forward to make sure such projects have more impact on the local communities. With donors becoming more open in their approaches and intention, and with demands for higher levels of accountability, donors and NGOs can be expected to become closer collaborative partners.

In Kenya, NGO's started becoming popular in the year 1980, with increased community projects around the region (Amutabi M. N., 2013). The bureaucratic approach that the then Kenyan government was applying was ineffective and frustrating western donors that had government-to-government agreements with the government. As a result, NGOs started to emerge as the more effective funding channel for local projects. Western donors increasingly recognized that NGOs had a better and more accountable performance record in implementing projects and that the grassroots communities were participated in planning and implementing the projects (Amutabi, 2013). In Imenti North Sub county donor funds through NGOs have been used since the 1980's. After this period Non-governmental organizations have become an integral part of the region's research and development agenda with a lot of focus going towards scholarship for economists, anthropologists, sociologists, and political science experts involved in research on

development issues. The sustainability of the strategies that have been used so far is influenced by a number of factors which will be investigated in this study.

Project sustainability has over the years increasingly become a participatory process that give due recognition to project target group and staff. Level of resources and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) ensures that donor funded projects are sustained to term. Donor funds recipients have often accorded M&E, level of funding/resources, involvement of target groups/community and participation of trained project staff minimal prominence and as a result projects take longer completion period, others fail to achieve the intended objectives. Other projects end up not being able to sustain themselves beyond the grant period because the requisite ownership by the target group was hardly instituted at project inception all through to completion (Mansuri & Rao, 2004).

Previous studies on project sustainability challenges have unearthed deficiency in expertise and capacity in M&E skills as well as reporting skills as the main challenges (Hanson & Kararach, 2011). The study did not show how other factors such as the target group involvement and project staff training influences sustainability of projects funded through western grants and donations. M&E and level of funding/resources are other factors worth looking at.

Sustainability of the donor funded agricultural projects and their purported beneficial impact one of the major concerns for stakeholders in the region's agricultural sector. Annually, hundreds of millions or billions of shillings from donors and the government agencies are channeled towards the establishment and improvement of agricultural projects in Kenya. These efforts, however, have not been proportionately rewards with only a few projects surviving through their expected life span and realizing the forecasted benefits. The realization that many donor-funded in the country may not be beneficial or poses a serious challenge for all concerned parties in Kenya and beyond. Several projects with huge implementation costs experience sustainability difficulties especially after project closure stage where by the donor exits and the said project is left to the beneficiaries. According to (Rogers et al., 2012) UNDP, the USAID, World Bank and other local and international development partners have also expressed concerns on sustainability of projects.

According to the County Government of Meru, several agricultural pilot projects have been that established in various sub-counties in regions that are not agriculturally developed. The county's Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries reports that the beneficiary regions include the former larger Imenti region i.e. North, South, and Central Imenti sub-counties, and the Tiganias Sub-counties. The results for these projects have not been impressive. According to (Terrapon-Pfaff et., 2014), the low sustainability of agricultural projects in sub-Sahara Africa can be attributed to lack of appropriate government policies legislation, inadequate institutional support by private and public agencies, unreliable funding systems, inefficient management, and lack of technical know-how and support.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the donor funding has increased in Meru County, agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County have posted unimpressive performance with respect to organizational management, operation, and maintenance once the implementing partners and donor agents hand the projects over to local management. To circumvent this problem, various donors and their implementation agents choose to continue running the projects but the operations would gradually start to cease. Such gradual deterioration has been attributed to lack of local support and funding to ensure the long-term maintenance and operation of the projects. There have also been several cases in which donors fall prey to the trap of unsustainable where operations go on well for a couple of months or years and then fade away gradually and eventually die off permanently (Adongo & Stork, 2006). Following recent researches and studies, it is becoming increasingly clear that a big portion of the communities in Imenti sub-counties are currently not adequately equipped to operate agricultural projects. The observation has been made prominently in cases where project managers employ local staff without the help of external support. The reports of failed agricultural projects in Meru County have unfortunately come at a time that there is consensus that sustainability and impactful improvement of the quality of life of local populations should be the ultimate goal of socioeconomic projects. The aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate the factors determining the long-term sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Meru County with specific focus on the Imenti North Sub County.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study-investigated factors influencing sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County, in Meru County, Kenya.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine how community involvement influence the sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County
2. To establish how availability of resources influence sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County.
3. To examine influence of training of project staff on sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County
4. To establish influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices on sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects in Imenti North Sub County

Project sustainability is one of the most critical challenges for all grassroots, national and international development agencies. The concept of sustainability can be seen within time and changing social, economic and political contexts. According to (Williams et al., 2012), sustainability is reflected in the capacity of the community to cope with change and adapt to new situations. A project that is seen as worth sustaining today may not be so in future. In the researcher's perspective, some definitions consider as a criterion of sustainability that the beneficiaries cover all costs after donor assistance has ended. The capacity to implement a program or facility exists and the beneficiaries are self-reliant (Bennett, 2003). (Pfahl, 2005) defines sustainability as the likelihood of a continuation in the stream of benefits produced by the project after the period of external support has ended. (Savaya & Spiro, 2012) notes that project sustainability concerns itself with the continuity of a project until it attains its set objectives. Sustainability is the ability of a community development project to maintain or expand a flow of benefits at a specified level for a long period after project inputs have ceased.

The basic idea of determinacy of sustainability should be designed to produce a continuous flow of outcomes for a long time. This refers to the continuation of benefits after development assistance has been completed because sustainability includes projects effects after implementation, the notion of building resilience to risk is party of the reason for focusing on the determinants of sustainability. Sustainability hence refers to sustainability of donor funded effect rather than any particular project organization which can be dissolved at the end of project implementation (WorldBank, 2012).

Sustainability is the ability of an organization to develop a strategy of growth and development that continues to function indefinitely. This implies that organizations need to have proper strategies covering advocacy, foundations and fundraising, governance, management and leadership among others (Allison & Kaye, 2011) . Donors play a significant role in the social development process in all regions of the world. They are particularly critical in circumstances where State funds are limited, political situations are fluid, natural disasters resulting from both predictable and unpredictable environmental circumstances occur, ethnic strife is rampant, and the level of per capita income severely restricts the ability to purchase needed goods and services - social, educational and economic.

Majority of the projects in the developing countries have shown a paradigm shift from self-reliant to donor-aided dependency and as a result, sustainability of these projects is wanting. When funding development projects, donors have the responsibility of phasing out their helping hand. Projects have timelines and donors may pull out their support due to various reasons. In several cases, phasing out a project is a well-calculated measure that ensures sustainability of the projects in the long term. Some other cases, political instability may be a reason that some

projects lack control over donor invested projects. Planning for a proper exit and sustainability is the exception rather than the rule in a joint donor evaluation of exit strategies in bilateral aid programmes (Heldgaar, 2008)

Within country programmes, politically motivated decision making on programming priorities can impact significantly on phasing out decisions and sustainability. These in-country processes are characterized by donors shifting from bilateral to harmonized multilateral budget support; or deciding on a shift in sector priorities due to domestic political pressure. By its nature, however, support to empowerment processes enables donors in country offices to insulate themselves somewhat from these external risks by integrating a "phasing over" approach into programme and project design, transferring programme activities to local organizations and networks (Oswald & Ruedin, 2012). During programme design and implementation, emphasis is placed on capacity building so that the services provided can continue through local organizations. Ensuring this approach is implemented from the start of a programme can reduce any negative impact of phasing out and better prepare programme partners for the unexpected.

Community Involvement and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

Involvement of the community influences the sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects; when members of the community are involved, at the initial stages up to a point when they are left to manage the project. The stakeholders and beneficiaries (Farrington & Lewis, 2014) define community participation as the collective examination and assessment of the program or project. A positive change is likely to occur when the target group is incorporated to help bringing the change (Bagheri & Hjorth, 2007). The community is therefore expected to be involved in all stages of the project. When communities participate, the idea is to take into account the importance local people's perspective and giving them a greater say in planning and managing the evaluation process. Local people, community organizations and other stakeholders decide together how to measure results and what actions should follow once this information has been collected and analyzed. According to (Elizabeth, 2006) there should be transparency and equitability in distribution of benefits to the community members. (Ismail & Richard, 2005) Cited that with participation by the community on a project that is affecting them helps improve the living standards hence improve quality of life.

When the community is involved in projects stages, there is teamwork accompanied with harmony towards achievement of a certain goal of the project. According to (McPherson, 2002) for community development to be achieved through sustainability of projects, there must be cooperation where togetherness is achieved by the various units. With assured cooperation, there is reduced self-interests among the members of the community, unemployment, socio-economic problems which are some factors that bring about disintegration hence leading to poor sustainability and performance of the project. (Mc Pherson, 2002) suggests that with community involvement supports the sustainability of donor-funded projects. (McPherson, 2002) sees

community involvement towards sustainability of donor funded project as very positive because of provision of labor, raw materials, and even support throughout the project conception.

The idea of participation can take different forms, including the initial expression of demand for agricultural projects, the selection of technology and its sitting, the provision of labor and local materials, a cash contribution to the project costs, the selection of the management type among others. It is thus the process through which demand-responsiveness is exercised, and empowerment achieved. Participation is viewed as a tool for improving the efficiency of a project, assuming that where people are involved they are more likely to accept the new project and partake in its ongoing operation. It is also seen as a fundamental right; that beneficiaries should have a say about interventions that affect their lives (McPherson, 2002). Community involvement is therefore based on the facts on voluntarily hence full commitment for the entire participation (Larson & Lach, 2008). By incorporating the community leaders, brings in a great advantage to the project because they have the ability to influence their members about the ideas generated towards implementation of the project. A greater advantage is because the community leaders are more exposed to the community beliefs hence know what the community wants this making it easier for the donor of the project.

(Munyoki & Mulwa, 2008) carried out a study and realized that the government just involves the community after the project decisions have been made, without consulting what type of need the community has. Through this, people are just receivers of the available resources. In this way there is not genuine community participation because first the donor or the government had first to identify the need for the project to the community people. Through this act, the community people are now able to generate their own ideas, develop goals, and find ways to attain them. This way the control is in the hands of the beneficiaries who know exactly what they want. The study findings therefore help in identifying the needs with the beneficiaries before putting the measures in their absence.

Community participation is a key instrument in creating self-reliant and empowered communities, stimulating project committees-level mechanisms for collective action and decision-making (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007). It is also believed to be instrumental in addressing marginalization and inequity, through elucidating the desires, priorities, and perspectives of different groups within a project area. Participatory methods now dominate in the implementation of development interventions at the Executive Committees level, the most common method being participatory Rural Appraisal. Participation is also aimed at increasing the sense of ownership over the agricultural project supply within community members (Moore & McKee, 2012).

Several studies on participation have been undertaken, and they include that of (Nyaguthii & Oyugi, 2013) who did a research on the influence of community participation on successful implementation of donor development projects in Kenya: case study of Mwea constituency. The findings from the research indicate that there is low community members' participation in

identification, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of Constituency Development Fund projects, and there is need to improve on the same. The recommendations made out of this study is that community members whether influential or not be involved in identification of the agricultural projects.

Secondly, there is need for the stakeholders appropriately recognizing and sharing of benefits. Organizations have many stakeholders including community leaders. No organization can be sustainable without analyzing and understanding stakeholders they are involved with, their needs, expectations, priorities, and responding to the needs .The other important aspect is that sustainability efforts remains in harmony with stakeholders interests. Organizations must recognize that needs of their stakeholders are subject to change and the change needs to be adopted so is the priorities, and interest (Botchway, 2009).

Designing with sustainability in mind is dearly an important factor in designs should be produced with as much input from involved organizations as possible. Input from beneficiaries and users are especially important but, unfortunately, are too often minimized because of the time and effort that has been involved in the whole process (Oino et al., 2015). According to (Poplin, 2009) he analyzed community action to be very important because it's a way of solving problems related to the agricultural projects hence the need to involve the communtiy to contribute towards the success of the project goal. With community involvement there is guaranteed teamwork and harmony in working which creates awareness among the community members.

(Heward et al., 2017) shows that there are some challenges regarding the community involvement likely to be; time consuming, complexity of activities, decision-making complications, and lack of expertise between the members. Therefore there is need to employ expertise only to avoid the constraints.

Availability of Resources and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

Even with the marginalized communities rich in unique resources help support the human life in a way (Haab & McConnell, 2002). Processed resources help meet community needs. Anything that can satisfy human needs is a resource (Haab & McConnell, 2002). Various donor policies can be important because they influence how contracts are prepared, the duration of funding, and what is funded. The role of resources is critical in the promotion of sustainability. Sustainability cannot be achieved without various resources. A good project to be sustainable should be in a position to adapt to environmental changes while the stakeholders still enjoy the desired outputs. The resources should be both readily available and cheap to exploit without compromising the state of the community (Cohen & Reynolds, 2015). Stakeholders should actively participate to influence the direction and detail of design and implementation. Allocating adequate time and resources for participatory analysis and responding to demand-led approaches are important ways to improve participation when dealing with agricultural projects (Cohen & Reynolds,

2015). Project benefits will not be produced without adequate resources; financial, human, natural, and technical to sustain them. Since development projects typically provide financial, and often human and technical resources, benefits cannot continue post project unless resources have been transferred to or can be acquired by the appropriate host country organizations. Natural resources are finite and must be used responsibly to ensure their continued availability for the development of future generations.

The other factor influencing development process is the resources of financing process, which includes raising and maintaining adequate funds for structures, which is a critical importance to sustainability. Insufficient financing is a major factor in poor maintenance which, in turn, is often cited as a reason for project failure. The commitment of resources, particularly financial resources, by beneficiary communities is seen as an important indicator of the expected value of the project to the communities. When communities recover from costs or stabilize in raising funds for maintenance, this contributes to sustainability through increasing resources available for sustaining and expanding benefits. Projects should run at a minimal cost on locally available labor and technology (Temali, 2012).

Training of Project Staff and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

Training is the process of inputting or acquiring knowledge by experiments, lessons, or practices to gain knowledge on something, which is then applied to gain expertise in it and get in a position to deal with challenges, and situations associated with the area of expertize (Burke, 2013). This therefore puts one in a position to create impact with the gained knowledge or skill through sharing, problem solving or innovating new ideas for future situations (Burke, 2013). The main purpose for training is to gain professionalism in the line of work. Therefore, the personnel involved in the implementation of the project should be trained according to the objectives of that project since lack of specified training leads to ignorance of appointed work or maybe filled with guess work which later on affects the sustainability of the project and its entire performance (Zainabu, 2008). With training for the donor funded projects requiring fieldwork especially in this agricultural sector, training a self-evaluation tool mainly because the researcher will be required to perform as per their skills.

According to (Hacker et al., 2012) by giving the community appropriate training helps in ensuring sustainability of the project. (Elonen & Artto, 2003) did a study and realized that the environment we dealing in is getting complex since he thought implementing a project was just easy and was definite to be successful. He saw that all projects were implemented with the same level of attitude for the sake of success but ended up just dying or not being sustained after a very short time after completion. After realizing this then he places a warning against putting project implementation resources into use before deciding on the managerial skills, which are acquired by conducting training to gain expertise to avoid misuse or misappropriation. At project inception, the project staffs are recruited and the project is inaugurated, often by a startup

workshop during which project management requirements are clarified for all parties concerned. In practice, this means that the project team identifies the information needed to guide the project strategy, ensure effective operations, and meet project implementation requirements. By involving staff at this point, chances of creating a learning environment are increased.

The effectiveness of project implementation often relies on involvement of all staff in the implementation process. Being involved in project implementation therefore means participating in the decision making and implementation process of the project (Norman, 2002) . Ideally, staff participation in project implementation is therefore critical for the implementation of donor-funded projects. The staff entrusted with implementation should have required technical expertise in their areas. Where necessary, skill levels should be augmented to meet the project implementation needs and with ongoing investments in developing such capacity within the project as necessary.

A study by (Zainabu, 2008) found out that projects in Kwale performed poorly due to lack or insufficient training hence rendering them ineffective and unsuccessful. According to the study, with sufficient training, it was easy to identify and easily correct any faults in connection to the success and sustainability of the project. It was assumed that through training, there is value addition due to adoption of new ideas due to improved processes (Barnighan, 2004). A study by (Zablon, 2008) identified that if operations were done manually they would very much be dependent on strength, which is therefore important to inaugurate training for innovations for reliability, affordability, and efficiency in the processes. Strategies acquired to internalize skills and knowledge, are through training and experiences.

Investing in sufficient supply of technical capacity is a continuous process during the life of a project and is very critical for the effective implementation of a project and contributing to a culture of responsibility in an organization (Hovmand, 2014). It helps to make sure that all staffs are kept informed of project plans, being clear on what is expected of them and how it will fit in with their work. Both formal training and on-the-job experience are important in developing a pool of expertise on project management. Project management professionals with the necessary skill can also play a key role in providing functional advice and guidance on the design and development of appropriate results-based performance systems (Mazvimavi & Twomlow, 2009).

One of the larger aspects of developing employee's skills and abilities is the actual organizational focus on the employee to become better, either as a person or as a contributor to the organization (Mazvimavi & Twomlow, 2009). Taking a micro and macro look at capacity building suggests that capacity development goes beyond a simple technical intervention. To a great extent focused on inducing behavior change, a process that involves learning, moderating attitudes, and possibly adopting new values at individual, organization, and system levels. Therefore, the focus of capacity building interventions must capture related conditions and concepts such as motivation, culture, and commitment, as well as changes in resource availability, skill levels, and management structure. As the foregoing discussion notes, project

staff are core to successful implementation of donor-funded projects (Springer-Heinze et al., 2003)

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Practices and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

Monitoring of projects is known as the continuous and periodic review and overseeing of the project to ensure that input deliveries, work schedules, target output, and other required actions proceed according to project plan. Evaluation attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the worth or significance of an intervention, strategy or policy. M&E is very critical in planning, designing, and implementing a project. According to (Gyorkos, 2003) there is need for a effective M&E strategy this is because carried out practices within the project activities help get the feedback on how the project progress is in order to take any required actins for the project sustainability. First, monitoring is carried out then followed by evaluation where the clarity of events is clearly identified for measures to be taken. Evaluation findings should be credible, and be able to influence decision-making by programme partners based on lessons learned. For the evaluation, process to be objective it needs to achieve a balanced analysis, recognize bias, and reconcile perspectives of different stakeholders including intended beneficiaries with different sources and strategies (Noe et al., 2017).

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) refers to a process where primary stakeholders, and these are those who are affected by the intervention being examined are active participants, take the lead in tracking and making sense of progress towards achievement of self-selected or jointly agreed results at the local level, and drawing actionable conclusions in the long-run. In overall, the effectiveness and sustainability of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation requires that it be embedded in a strong commitment towards corrective action by communities, project management, and other stakeholders in a position to act. Monitoring and Evaluation, is particularly important to sustainability since it allows an on-going review of project effectiveness. There are different examples of indicators to be monitored would be verifying that communities are maintaining an adequate Operation and Maintenance fund or a continued supply of spare parts to project area (Sampson, 2002).

Monitoring and Evaluation should involve beneficiaries, giving them the opportunity to decide on the criteria of success. Evaluations should be used as a management tool to identify any deficiencies and to establish a course of action to remedy problems, which results to sustainability (Noe et al., 2017). In addition, it enables the reinforcement of initial positive results. It is a major aspect that cannot be over looked because it determines the sustainability of any venture or project. One of the reasons for project failure is lack of project monitoring and control. The success and sustainability of any project or program largely depend on constant feedbacks about project ongoing programs (Oino et al., 2015)

In Murang'a a study done on influence of management practices on sustainability of youth income-generating projects was done. The findings revealed that majority of the youth projects in Kangema were only evaluated twice a year and 23% had not been evaluated at all. Monitoring and evaluation is important in the sustainability of a project and therefore the frequency of monitoring and evaluation should be enhanced in all the project stages. This was also supported by views of other researchers who argue that, monitoring forms an integral part of all successful projects and without access to accurate and timely information, it is difficult if not impossible to manage an activity, project or program effectively (Oino et al., 2015). In the same study the findings indicate that Monitoring and while a small proportion of the groups evaluated by expertise in M&E. Similarly, a study done on the challenges of agricultural projects in both rural and urban areas of Kenya points out technical issues as one of elements affecting sustainability. No matter how well designed system is, if it is not technically efficient, it will not deliver or perform the anticipated functions. This is the reason why many projects, especially in the areas, are not sustainable or cannot be replicable due to inadequate technical interventions. The absence of such technical instructions (during follow up and monitoring) at project level implies inadequate technological transfer and poor project management resulting in a high failure rate.

Assessment of the infrastructure shows that the communities were not fully involved in the planning and technology selection. The method employed were not understood nor issued to the community on the commissioning of the project. Stakeholders' analysis, which is a common tool to enable development facilitators to evaluate how well they intend to respond to different interests of key stakeholders in Monitoring and Evaluation. Stakeholders analysis is usually used to identify different types and forms of monitoring and evaluation information demanded by different stakeholders who place varying degree to different types of information in relation to their needs and interests (Guerci & Vinante, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Realistic Evaluation Theory

This theory was developed by Pawson and Tilley, 1997. The theory stresses the components of a good project to be Context (C) and Mechanism (M), which account for outcome (O). Mechanisms describe what it is about projects that bring about any effects. Mechanisms are often hidden thus explicate the logic of a project; they trace the destiny of a project theory, they pinpoint the ways in which the resources on offer may permeate into the reasoning of the subjects. This theory is a distinctive viewpoint on how intervention brings about change in patterns of behavior, events, or conditions also generated by bringing in fresh ideas. According to the theory, projects are theories, they are embedded, they are active, and they are part of open systems. Therefore, the successful implementation of projects will depend on the synergy and participation of donor agencies, policy architects, project staff and target groups according to Pawson and Tilley realistic evaluation theory.

Because of relevant variations in context and mechanisms thereby activated, any project is liable to have mixed outcome patterns. Outcome-patterns comprise the intended and unintended consequences of projects, resulting from the activation of different mechanisms in different contexts. Realists do not rely on a single outcome measure to deliver a pass/fail verdict on a project. Nor does it make a hard and fast distinction between outputs (intermediate implementation targets) and outcomes (changes in the behavior targeted). This theory recognizes that as they are delivered, projects are embedded in social systems. It is through the workings of entire systems of social relationships that any changes in behaviors, events, and social conditions are effected and therefore project implementation process must take heed of the different layers of social reality which make up and surround projects. For instance, a project of prisoner education and training may offer inmates the immediate resources to start on the road to reform.

The theory holds that project resources can be the spur promoting change, but whether and to what extent that transformation will hold is contingent on the social circumstances of that society. The theory also takes cognizance of the fact that projects are active. The triggers of change in most projects are ultimately located in the reasoning and resources of those touched by the project. Effects are thus generally produced by and require the active engagement of individuals. According to this theory, active projects only work through the stakeholders' reasoning meaning that an understanding of the interpretations of project participants is integral to project outcomes.

The theory's other principle states that projects are open systems that cannot be fully isolated or kept constant. Unanticipated events, political change, personnel moves, physical and technological shifts, inter-project and intra-project interactions, practitioner learning, media coverage, organizational imperatives, performance management and innovations make projects permeable and plastic. This makes it mandatory that M&E is integrated in project implementation to review project progress towards its objectives. The theory is alive and alert to the importance of stakeholders to project development and delivery.

Resource Dependence Theory

(Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), developed resource dependence theory. In employing this theory to this study, the researcher looks at how the dependence on external resources affects sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects. The researcher argues that donor funded projects are dependent on resources that ultimately originates from the environment and other organizations. Resources are a basis of power; legally independent organizations can therefore be dependent on each other (Jakachira, 2013). By adopting this theory, the researcher also argues that; in as much as organizations are inter-dependent, the theory of Resource.

According to this theory, organization depends on resources for their existence; therefore, for any organization to achieve sustainability, resources are indispensable. For donor funded agricultural projects to achieve sustainability, resources are important. The researcher therefore

argues that these resources will not only come in the form of financial resources but for project sustainability, other human resources should be considered. This theory will address the question on availability of resources such as funding in sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects.

Systems Theory

Systems theory is traced back in the 1968 and is linked to a biologist who integrated it in his study on general system theory by the Von Bertalanffy. It consists various fields incorporated to identify and understand a problem to be solved. He argued that to solve for example a community problem, there was need to develop critical thinking towards the subject whether it is influenced by many other factors (Midgley, 2003 & Kerzner, 2006). This theory is closely related to the sustainability theory because it acknowledges harmony and trust in this study, sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects, there will be need to incorporate systematic and logical processes of developing community structure, community involvement, and human relations to ensure the arranged project is achieved. The theory does not believe in isolation of either man and nature or artificial natures. It is therefore important to understand the proceedings of this project because in itself is a system that needs to be followed in order to identify the various sustainability factors likely to be linked to the study.

This theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy describes some factors likely to be employed in this study, which involve the aspects of community involvement, allocation of community resources, planning, and power-sharing activities among many others influencing the sustainability of the agricultural project hence can be described by the systems theory. Systems theory helps in the organizing of information and development of programs to help in running the project by managing projects change and recognizing uncertainties likely to exist and enabling flexibility of the project.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Munyoki & Mulwa (2012) define a research design as the structure and strategy of the investigative work that a researcher does in their quest to find the answers to a set research question. For this research study, the researcher applies descriptive research methods involving quantitative research approach and design. The descriptive type of research design seeks to describe a phenomena by answering the where, when, and/or how much questions about the phenomena. In this study, the descriptive research design includes the surveys to find facts on the required data regarding the project. It is preferred because of its accuracy since it is developed from events in a population as they are. By applying this research design, the researcher was able to generate knowledge that can be used to describe or profile the phenomenon being studied. The

study made use of descriptive design, which makes use of survey questionnaires to collect data for compilation, analysis, and tabulation for future characterization through statistical analysis. The study also incorporates the statistical 70 elements that were designed to quantify and qualify the extent of a target group's awareness, thoughts, and belief concerning the phenomenon being studied (Kombo & Tromp, 2013)

Target Population

Population can be defined as the total number of individuals, items, or events that have common identifiable characteristics that allow them to be grouped together yet distinguishing them from others (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population comprised of 135 agency representatives, ministry of agriculture staff, community members, and farmers from the community.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

According to (Singh & Masuku, 2014), sample size refers to the subset of the entire population that the researcher studies as a representative of the population. Stratified and simple random sampling technique was used in this study. From each category, representative samples were drawn through simple random methods. In this case, the researcher selected randomly the respondents keeping in mind that every item in the strata has an equal chance of being selected into the sample. To obtain the desired sample size for the study with the population of 135, Nassiuma (2015), formula was used since it's more precise than other formulas. The computation was as shown;

$$n = \frac{N\,(cv^2)}{Cv^2 + (N-1)\,e^2}$$

Where: ***n***= sample size; ***N*** = population (135); ***Cv***= coefficient of variation (take 0.6); ***e***= tolerance of desired level of confidence (take 0.05) at 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{135\,(0.6^2)}{0.6^2 + (135-1)\,0.05^2} = \mathbf{69.93}$$ (rounded to **70**)

The ration will therefore be70/135 =0.52. This was used across all the strata to get the sample for each stratum. Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individual selected represents the large group from which they are selected. A sample size of between 10% and 40% is considered adequate for detailed or in-depth studies. The study selected the respondents using stratified proportionate random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling is unbiased sampling method of grouping heterogeneous population into homogenous subsets then selecting within the individual subset to ensure representativeness.

Data Collection Instruments

Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire was made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. The open-ended questions were used so as to encourage the respondent to give an in-depth and felt response without feeling held back in illuminating of any information and the closed ended questions allowed respondents to respond from limited options that had been stated. According to (Johnson & Turner, 2003), the open ended or unstructured questions allow profound response from the respondents while the closed or structured questions are generally easier to evaluate. The questionnaires were used in an effort to conserve time and money as well as to facilitate an easier analysis as they were in immediate usable form.

Data Collection Procedures

A permit to authorize the researcher to collect data was obtained from the Headquarters National Commission for Sciences, Technology, and innovation (NACOSTI). A copy of the permit was submitted to the ministry of education and agriculture department in Meru County. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the identified respondents personally to create a rapport. The researcher also obtained an informal consent from the respondents and explained the purpose and objective when administering the questionnaire. Assurance was given to the respondents that the information provided shall be treated as confidential and was only be used for academic purposes. The researcher administered the questionnaires using the drop and pick technique.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21.0) was used to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The questionnaires were referenced and the items in them were codified in order to expedite the data entry process. The data first underwent the cleaning process, which involved assessment of the collected data to identify and correct data entry errors. The researcher then derived estimates of the descriptive statistics like percentages, frequencies, mean scores and standard deviation, and tabulate the resultant information. An analysis of the qualitative data collected using the open-ended questions was done using the conceptual content analysis. A discussion of the analysis was presented in prose. The researcher conducted inferential data analysis through the multiple regression analysis approach. Multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the relations between the independent and dependent variables. The multiple regressions approach is preferable because it allows the application of two or more independent variables in predicting a single dependent variable. In this study there are four independent variables and the multiple regression model assumed the following equation;

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

Where: Y= Sustainability of donor funded Agricultural projects; β_0=constant; β_1, β_2, β_3 and β_4 = regression coefficients; X_1= Community Involvement; X_2= Resource availability; X_3= Training of staff; X_4=Monitoring and evaluation; ε=Error Term

The variables were significant if their p-values were less than that of 0.05.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to investigate how community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff, monitoring and evaluation influenced sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County.

Community Involvement and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

The study found that community was involved in project implementation which enabled in the sustainability of projects undertaken by the donors. The respondent also agreed that the implementation team involved group members on project identification/conceptualization. However, there were a significant number of respondents who were of the opinion that they never shared in the profitability of projects, which somehow later affected the sustainability of the same projects.

Resources Availability and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

The study found that availability of resources increases significantly influences sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects. The study established that that procedures for acquisition of tenders are properly documented and that resources are adequate and assist in the running of the project. Further the study revealed that the budget allocation is low for the project to be sustainable and that the resources are not available to ensure sustainability. This was also reinforced by the view that the budget allocation is low for the project to be sustainable and which needed more allocations.

Training of Project Staff and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

The findings revealed that the staff members operate within the maxim and requirement of the project due to their training from colleges or otherwise and that a few needed more training that is focused on project implementation and monitoring. However, the study found out that the project are not doing well because of limited staff training in some areas of the projects. This was hard hitting and resulted in some projects not being sustainable especially finance allocations and monitoring and evaluation. It was also observed that staff training has never been implemented

in some of the projects being undertaken leading to failure of the same and hence affecting donor funded projects in the area of the study.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Sustainability of Donor Funded Agricultural Projects

The major aim of the study in this area was to find out to what extent do monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices influence sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti North Sub County. In this connection therefore, the study established that monitoring and evaluation feedback is utilized for improvement and that monitoring and evaluation is fully participatory with community involvement in some projects but not all of them. Further the study established monitoring and evaluation is document for project continuity yet not done in some of the areas under study for the sustainability of donor funded projects.

INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

Multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation analysis was conducted at 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level 1-tailed to establish the relationship between the variables. The research used statistical package for social sciences (SPSS V 21.0) to code, enter and compute the measurements of the multiple regression.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

According to (Hox et al., 2017), correlation technique was used to analyze the degree of association between two variables. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and the direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. The analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation was based on the assumption that the data is normally distributed and also because the variables are continuous.

The study computed into single variables per factor by obtaining the averages of Community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff and Monitoring and evaluation. Pearson's correlations analysis was then conducted at 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level 2-tailed. Table 1 indicates the correlation matrix between the factors (Community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff and Monitoring and evaluation) and sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya.

As per table 1 there is a positive relationship between sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya and community involvement as shown by coefficient of 0.714, a positive relationship between sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya and availability of resources as shown by coefficient of 0.611, a positive relationship between sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya and training

of project staff as expressed by coefficient of 0.522 and a positive relationship between sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya and Monitoring and evaluation as illustrated by a coefficient of 0.672. This shows all variable were significant in determining the influence of implementation of quality management system on sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

		Sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects	Community involvement	Availability of resources	Training of project staff	Monitoring and evaluation
Sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.				
Community involvement	Pearson Correlation	. 714	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.			
Availability of resources	Pearson Correlation	.611	.513	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.026	.		
Training of project staff	Pearson Correlation	.522	.423	.0.327	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.012	.018	.	
Monitoring and evaluation	Pearson Correlation	0.672	.533	.520	.431	1

Regression Analysis

The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis to test the relationship between the variables. This showed how the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variables.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.859	0.737	0.716	1.158

From the findings, the independent variables were statistically significant predicting the dependent variable since adjusted R square was 0.716. This implied that 71.6% variations in sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County,

Kenya are explained by community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff and Monitoring and evaluation. Other institutional factors influencing sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya that were not covered in this study accounted for 38.4% which form the basis for further studies.

Table 3: ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	199.121	4	49.780	35.048	.000
	Residual	71.017	50	1.420		
	Total	270.138	54			

From the ANOVA Table, p-value was 0.000 and F-calculated was 35.048. Since p-value was less than 0.05 and the F-calculated was greater than F-critical (2.455), then the regression relationship was significant in determining how community involvement, availability of resources, and training of project staff and Monitoring and evaluation influenced sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya .

Table 4: Coefficients of Determination

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.267	0.182		3.317	.001
Community involvement	0.812	0.321	0.714	2.530	.014
Availability of resources	0.712	0.278	0.611	2.561	.013
Training of project staff	0.568	0.208	0.462	2.731	.007
Monitoring and evaluation	0.771	0.312	0.672	2.471	.016

The established model for the study was:

$$Y= 1.267 + 0.812X_1 + 0.712X_2 + 0.568X_3 + 0.771X_4$$

Where: Y= Sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya; X_1= Community involvement; X_2= Availability of resources; X_3= Training of project staff; X_4= Monitoring and evaluation

The regression equation above has established that taking (community involvement, availability of resources, training of project staff and Monitoring and evaluation), sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya will be 1.267. The findings presented also show that increase in the community involvement leads to 0.812 increase in the score of sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya if all other variables are held constant. This variable was significant since 0.014 was less than 0.05.

Further it was found that if availability of resources increases, there is a 0.712 increase in sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya. This variable was significant since 0.013 was less than 0.05.

Further, the findings show that a unit increases in the scores of managements support would leads to 0.568 increase in the score of sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya. The study also found that a unit increases in the scores of Monitoring and evaluation would lead to a 0.771 increase in the scores of sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya. This variable was significant since 0.00 was less than 0.016.

Overall, community involvement had the greatest influence on sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya followed by Monitoring and evaluation, then availability of resources while training of project staff had the least influence on the sustainability of donor funded agricultural projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya . All the variables were significant since their p-values were less than 0.05.

CONCLUSION

Community participation in any project is very much important aspect for the continuity of any project especially for sustainability of donor-funded projects. This helps in understanding how the community has accepted the project or not. It is the conclusion of this study that, for any project to be successful, the community either must be present or represented by individuals who have been elected to represent them in such matters.

Resources are an important aspects in any donor funded project and its sustainability. This study concluded that resources need to be available and should be adequate for sustainability of donor-funded projects. Budget allocations need to be fully inclusive and considerate of the local resources.

It further concludes that training of staff for projects is a requirement in order to have the desired outcomes especially in the aspect of sustainability of donor-funded projects. The capacity to gain knowledge and incite of the project and its requirements is a recommended approach to oversee the project. Project managers of community that do not understand the details and requirements of any project, makes the same project to take long time to achieve the set goals.

Many projects fail because they haven't undergo the whole process of project management, this is why this current study concluded that monitoring and evaluation should be done and feedback given should aim at improving the whole concept of the project in order to realize the sustainability of donor funded projects. Documentation of M&E should be done in accordance with the set standards of the donor or the organization.

Finally, it was concluded that the frequency of Monitoring opportunities improves the performance of the projects and facilitates negotiations and identification of gaps. Further, the study concluded the efficiency and effectiveness of M&E plan development forums makes processes more transparent as well as providing clear regulatory frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be enhanced community participation in any donor-funded project since it shows how the communities are willing to undertake the project and own it. The community should be sensitized to be heavily involved in these projects. This can be done through including them as the stakeholders of the projects as well as allowing them to contribute to the projects hence improving the performance of the projects.
2. Resources are an ingredient that all funded projects need to a certain before embarking on the project itself, since the scarcity of it will bring down the project and there will be no meaning to have the project at all. For this to happen, there need to have a feasibility study, that looks at the resources availability and their adequacy so that proper budget should be constructed and money made available all through.
3. Low capacity of understanding of what the project requires from the management is as a result of low training or technical knowhow of the project. There is therefore a need to make sure that staffs are trained in the technical aspect of the projects they are undertaking to realize the sustainability of donor funded project.
4. The study also recommends that the information gained from the monitoring and evaluation should be used to guide the project supervisors where more planning and management is needed and recommend any action required

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