

# **The role of Stakeholder Involvement in the Sustainability of Projects; a Case Study of Nyeri County Referral Hospital, Nyeri, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** The context of sustainability is a situation where minimal changes in project outputs are experienced regardless of the social, economic and political changes. Generally, sustainable development is achieved through involving the community in participating in the benefits intended. This study therefore focused on how stakeholder's involvement influences sustainability of funded projects in public hospital: a case of HIV/AIDS projects funded at Nyeri County Referral Hospital. The target population for this study was 137 employees from the HIV/AIDS programmes funded at Nyeri County Referral Hospital. All the 137 members in the target population were to be included in the study. The relationship between the dependent and independent variable was assessed using linear regression. The findings of the stakeholder involvement significantly influenced project sustainability. The regression model developed showed that the model which shows that 46.6% of the variation in project sustainability is explained by the variation of predictors in the model. The study therefore reached a conclusion that involving stakeholders at all stages of the process contributes greatly to the success of the project.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The impact of HIV and AIDS on the general population is adverse. It was estimated in a report by World Bank (2013) that more than 42 Million people are affected by it. In the same period, it was reported that over 20 Million deaths had been attributed to HIV and AIDS. Because of these consequences, interventions to curb the disease were defined by different governments along with support from donors. Notably, several gains have been made in terms of treatment and preventive interventions for HIV in most countries. However, there are several challenges arising from the sustainability of these gains in countries that relied more on donor funds than governmental financing.

## **II. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Kenya has a mid-level HIV/AIDS epidemic coupled with low income levels. The donor fatigue has since started setting in with a dip in disbursements since 2010 (Grépin, 2012). Nevertheless, the country has managed to achieve relatively high levels of ART coverage (Mathauer, Cavagnero, Vivas & Carrin, 2010)). The cost of sustaining this coverage is unrealistic with an estimated \$350 million in 2010–2011 for ART, PMTCT, laboratory and diagnostic materials, opportunistic infection treatment and nutrition. For the same period, an estimated \$300 million was available, most of which came from PEPFAR. As the Kenya HAPSAT (HIV/AIDS Program Sustainability Analysis Tool) report points out, levels of donor funding, support and capacity building are likely to decrease over time, while the population requiring HIV/AIDS services will only continue to increase (Katz, Glandon, Wong, Kargbo, Ombam, Singh & Osika, 2013). As a way to cope this challenge National AIDS Control Council (NACC) through the help of HAPSAT proposed decentralization of HIV/AIDS treatment and care as a way to increase the overall efficiency of service delivery (UNAIDS, 2009). According to the Health Policy Project Report (2015), over the period from FY 2013/14 to FY 2017/18, the health sector is projected to cost US\$13,142 million (KSh 1,103 billion). Management and delivery of Kenya Essential Package for Health (KEPH) interventions through health projects will require the largest share of the health sector cost at 43 percent. Projects on Human Resources for Health, logistics and health infrastructure make up 55 percent of the total health sector project cost, while health information systems, health financing, and governance make up 2 percent (USAID, 2015).

Further statistics from Government of Kenya (GoK) reveal that 63% of the health projects fail after a short time after implementation, thereby being not sustainable (GoK, 2014). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that health projects in public hospitals collapse one year after

completion of the projects (OECD, 2014). Despite all the efforts from the various development partners, most of the health projects in public hospitals experience major challenges in implementing of strategies and success of projects planned. Most of the projects that have been started have either failed or are delayed due to lack of sustainability strategies (World Bank, 2013). Kenya is one of the countries that continues to face challenges in the health sector to ensure their sustainability (WB, 2013). By 2030, there is need for the government to ensure that the projects that had been previously financed by financial donors continue to benefit the community so that the challenges can be addressed. This study therefore focused on how stakeholders involvement influences sustainability of funded projects in public hospital: a case of HIV/AIDS projects funded at Nyeri County Referral Hospital.

### **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Sustainability and Project Sustainability**

The context of sustainability is a situation where minimal changes in project outputs are experienced regardless of the political, social and economic changes. The society is expected to devise mechanisms to cope with these changes and these adaptations should be able to reflect sustainability (Williams, 2012). Project sustainability is when the people are able to enjoy the gains made from different projects regardless of the social, economic and political changes (IFAD, 2015). In Kenya, there are several challenges attributed to the withdrawal of donors within the HIV and AIDS sector. Along with their withdrawal, there are several essential components of the project that are taken away and a need to occupy that becomes eminent. According to LaPelle, Zapka and Ockene (2016), these components include financial support, managerial roles, and technical assistance. The disjointed functionality of the project is therefore dependent on the manner in which the country and the community adapts in order to sustain continuous benefits.

HIV and AIDS financing in Kenya is highly donor dependent. The first notable instance when the government began financing HIV and AIDS programmes was in the year 2010. The contribution has however been on a slow trajectory in terms of replicating the support offered by donors. It is characteristic that donors are drawn to invest more in areas where support is needed more than others. This has resulted in the redistribution of resources to countries that are most vulnerable. Most countries with middle income economies continue to experience decline in terms of donor support. Considering that Kenya is among the low middle income earning countries, the support by the donors has considerably gone low. Despite the fact that international donors had tried to achieve their goals in terms of HIV and AIDS funding and its gains, low income countries began experiencing difficulties in sustaining the programmes (Global HIV Prevention Working Group, 2008).

Sustainability of projects is dependent on many factors. According to a research conducted by Chen (2013) on the factors influencing healthcare projects and healthcare provision, it was established that one of the human resources for health (HRH) had a negative impact on the implementation of healthcare projects in China. The study further explained that the HRH was essential in the sense that most of the human resource capital provided not only technical and managerial assistance, but also that managers were the chain-link between the projects and the stakeholders as they had a wider understanding of their needs. The Kenya Vision 2030 strategic objective for health is pegged on healthcare service delivery. A number of established healthcare projects established are required to have proper management and leadership structures that are key in defining the key outputs a of the project and its beneficiaries.

Stakeholder involvement is considered and essential component in sustainability of healthcare projects. They are essentially the groups or people who are affected by the project either in a direct manner or indirectly including people, groups or organizations that have the ability to influence the projects (African Development Bank, 2001). These influencers can either influence the projects negatively or positively. Stakeholders are inclusive of, but not limited, people of a community, different levels of governance, political players, the clergy, civil society, and any other groups that derive some peculiar interests in the projects (Harrington, 2016). Targeted services are in one way or another tied to any group at any given time. The need to ensure continuous participation of these groups therefore informs the inherent feature of sustainability in these projects (Marston, Renedo, McGowan & Portela , 2013).

One of the main principles of stakeholder involvement is that their contribution and participation must be voluntary. This ensures that the stakeholders stay committed in driving the general agenda of the project as well as ensuring that the representation of different groups is optimal (Cusworth & Franks, 2013). Feedback channels are seamless ensuring that the projects are sustainable (Ebner and Baumgartner, 2010). It is essential that the outputs realized from the project can be translated to suit the different aspects of the needs of the stakeholders. This calls for different adaptation strategies to avoid goal shifting in instances where change occurs. Davis, Nkonya, Kato, Mekonnen, Odendo, Miiro & Nkuba, (2012) indicated that if change is obligatory, measures to maintain reliable supply of services should be availed variations associated with commodity pricing must remain the same or even cheaper.

### **Influence of stakeholder's involvement on sustainability of funded projects in public hospital**

When an activity or process is done and affects some individuals either directly or indirectly, then those affected are called stakeholders by the World Bank. The sustainable development is achieved through involving the community in participating in the benefits intended. The initiatives that are intended to benefit individuals can be known through the individuals observing the economic and social environment understanding it as argued by Ahmed & Palermo (2010). The individuals that are affected by a decision, are interested and have the power to influence its results are enabled as the good stakeholders of a project. The stakeholders are a critical factor in ensuring the achievement of sustainability in the intervention development.

Chauvet, Collier and Duponchel, (2010) study focused on the best project success measurements, and that the study recognized the significance of bearing in mind key stakeholders' perceptions for a project to be sustainable and successful. The involvement of stakeholders was shown through a study done in Pakistan where eighty projects were selected randomly. There had been various issues that had led to the failure and slowness of the projects despite the development projects that had been implemented in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The study found that the Forest Department, project beneficiaries (local communities) and local Community Based Organizations did not have a good interaction (Cheung, Zolin, Turner & Remington, 2010).

Adopting a new model of success whereby success was assessed by project managers and different project stakeholders, Cheung in his research among the public organization of Australia's defense industry, found that Project Managers appear to understand most important issues for each stakeholder group; which was rated as a very important success factor (Cheung et al, 2010). Telephone survey was conducted in late 2009 and data analyzed using Krippendorff's Kappa alpha reliability test.

Another study was done in Northern Congo by Ahmed and Palermo (2010) where the natural resource management required the involvement of stakeholders, so they needed to be included in the design and implementation of the projects as their own contribution played an important role for sustainable and long term benefits (Colclough & De, 2010). Projects success therefore involves involving the stakeholders in making of decisions and having a good relation with the project members (Gale, Sellar, Parker, Hattam, Comber, Trante & Bills, 2010). These findings were supported by a study done in Embakasi, Nairobi by Kimani and Kamaara on how CDF projects were influenced by planning through participation of all stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation so that the projects would be a success. Successful projects also involved satisfying the needs of the stakeholders (Kimani & Kamaara, 2019).

All organizations depend on the management of stakeholders for their projects to succeed. When an activity or process is done and affects some individuals either directly or indirectly, then those affected are called stakeholders as defined by (Nzekwe, Oladejo, & Emoh, 2015). Stakeholders are many and they influence projects in various different ways. The characteristics of stakeholders include; power, legitimacy and urgency as indicated by Thomas and Martin (2014). These characteristics should thus be understood by the project managers so that they can involve the stakeholders per their characteristics and provide them with roles.

The project's life determines the stakeholder's number and nature; thus the project manager will be able to provide them with appropriate roles (Thite, 2001). Community participation involves a number of processes that need to be followed to ensure that the community understands their roles and reason for participation. How they benefit from the process should be taught to them so that they can understand their roles. How their resources are allocated to them and the roles they play to make sure that they understand their roles is very crucial for the present and future development of the community to ensure that the projects in the community are also a success.

## **IV. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **The Theory of Sustainability**

The theory of sustainability is the principal theory in which the study was pegged on. It advocates for utilization of resources in a manner that is likely to preserve its gains in the present through to the future while preserving the environment in a sustainable manner. It seeks to contextualize the concept of sustainability in development projects implemented at different levels characteristic to the interest of the implementer as well as that of the recipients. In Kenya, most healthcare projects are targeted helping the populace gain financial assistance while alleviating poverty that is rife among them. However, the economic progress that Kenya has made has led to a shift in terms of donor priorities. The sustainability theory therefore offers a means to which the country should be responsive depending on the kind of change that is being experienced.

There are several components that define the sustainability theory. These components include; the normativity concept, the concept of choice, and the geographical location as a determinant of where the project is being implemented (Harrington, 2016). In terms of choice, sustainability was considered to be determined by time of project execution, the inherent importance that can be derived from the projects, the processes taken into consideration to ensure that there are pathways to ensure sustainability of the projects, and that sustainability has targets that can occasionally change. It is therefore implied that if appropriate choices are not

made in the right moment in time, sustainability cannot be achieved. However, some degree of flexibility is offered by this theory in that the provision for gradual or sudden changes are offered and choices are made befitting such situations.

Normativity of projects is deduced from different views as well. First, Harrington (2016) proposed that the projects need to be viewed in terms of relevance. This includes considering the desirability of the projects by the targeted recipients. To achieve this a modus to guide the decision to implement must be defined. One of the proposed ways is that a decision to initiate a project needs to be guided or informed by research. This way, a rational is arrived at in terms of providing relevant and selective interventions. This ensures that there is appropriate feedback mechanisms in terms of the outputs and benefits that different stakeholders derive from the project.

In terms of the scale of the projects and the location in which it is implemented, there are several characteristic views that can be drawn from them based on Harrington (2016). The implementation of projects varies from location to location. This informs the reason why the scale of donor supported projects are likely to target populations with low economic standings. Again, the scale of implementation for urban, sub-urban, and rural areas have varied needs and thus a different project implementation strategy will suit them in their respective locales. Cultural orientations also determines the success of project implementation. Some cultures could be receptive of certain interventions but others may not. This notwithstanding, the variations of project scales are attributed to the economic situations in different countries. Donors are bound to choose countries with low economic standings than they would choose middle income countries and high income countries.

Finally, the systems way of project execution is majorly restricted within different settings. This is to mean that the project can be categorized as globally run, national, or a specific case in a prearranged locality like projects that are run by an institution or a mandated organization in the arm of government. More often than not, the implementation of different projects necessitates that structures must be established within varied settings but these setting must support their sustainability. As such, issues of capacity and structural infrastructure are key in determining sustainability.

### **Resource Dependency Theory**

The theory of Resource Dependence Theory was developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). It places emphasis on how different organizations are affected in varied ways by resources obtained externally and how they affect the day to day operations of an organization. Most organizations consider the external resources to be the foundation of its existence. The ability of an institution to create demand for services is a measure for success within the organization, different donors, and from government. Despite the fact that organizations depend on resources for existence, some organizations are self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency in terms of resources is however not entirely all that the organizations require. Inter-linkages between organizations pivotal in ensuring that services are sustainable. As such, organizations depend on each other in more ways than they do not.

The need to however examine and study RDT is eminent despite the dependency that organizations have on each other. It in some way introduces flaw into the fundamentals of sustainability. Its lack of wholeness in defining how institutions rely on each other introduces uncertainties that must then be covered by introduction of other theories. One of the most common challenge that is not clearly defined by the theory is the uncertainty of finances. Since resource availability is considered an important factor in ensuring the sustainability of projects, resources have not be tied clearly with sustainability. Essentially, the resources are not central in the theory.

This study is based on the Resource Dependence Theory. The RDT was used to explicate how resources of organizations influence the sustainability of projects. There are several components that can be considered as resource materials. Some of them come in form of human capital, stakeholders, land, and finances. For a project to start there is need to identify the need from people who would directly or indirectly benefit from the project outputs. After having identified them, the source of funds needs to be determined and the duration in which the finances can sustain a project. After having done this, the scope of implementation is drafted, and the interventions requirements specified. Clearly, the flow of these resources are not disjointed in any way. In this breath, lack of certainty in the definitions of uncertainty for financial resources in the theory is a bit discouraging. However, the study employed the use of this theory to define the cosmos in which resources influence the sustainability of projects.

## **V. METHODS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS**

A descriptive research design was used to collect study information. One of the strengths of this design is that the respondents are observed or issued with research instruments which they populate with minimum influence from the researcher (Creswell, 2002). This boosts the authenticity of the information collected as the respondents are given the freedom to express their views wholesomely. This helps reduce or even eliminate any

chances of bias that is occasioned by the researcher pre-existing objectives. Structured questionnaires with closed and open ended questions were issued to the respondents using the drop and pick method. Before the respondents were allowed to populate their responses, the researcher ensured that the research was guided by confidentiality and that the information offered by the respondents was used for the purposes of the research only. Other than this, another ethical consideration made was in compliance with the requirements by National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) after obtaining clearance to conduct the research from the Management University of Africa. A letter was also sent to the Nyeri County Hospital Administration seeking consent to conduct the research within the organization. A formal request was submitted to NACOSTI to seek permission and acknowledgement to undertake the research, the authorization was given.

The study targeted a total of 137 respondents from the Nyeri County Referral Hospital See Table 1. The respondents were all issued with the questionnaires and collected after they were done filling them. The questionnaires were picked later on call back where the respondents had not provided information that same day. Data collection and analysis commenced from August of 2019 to October 2019. The data was coded, cleaned and analyzed using SPSS Version 22. Both descriptive analysis in form of frequency distribution and percentages and inferential statistics were used in the analysis according to the theme of the study. Inferential statistics were used to determine the nature of relationship between Stakeholder Involvement and Sustainability of projects.

**Table 1: Target Population**

<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Number</b>
HIV/AIDS programme coordinators	11
Care & Treatment service providers (SPs)	17
HTS SPs	43
PMTCT SPs	21
Adolescents & Young ppl 's SPs	18
Donor/Implementing partners supported SPs	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>

Source: Nyeri County Registry, 2019

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he multiple regression equation model adopted for the study is a shown below

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby Y = Sustainability of Donor Funded Health Programmes

X1= Stakeholders Involvement

While  $\beta_1$  is the coefficients of X1 which is the independent variables and  $\varepsilon$  is the error term.

## VI. RESULTS

The researcher sought to establish whether the respondents were of the opinion that stakeholders' involvement influence the sustainability of HIV projects in public hospitals. Based on the results, majority of the respondents (88.7%) indicated that stakeholders' involvement influence project sustainability while 11.3% indicated that stakeholder's involvement had no influence project sustainability.

**Table 2: Influence of Stakeholders Involvement of Project Sustainability**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	73	68.9%
<b>No</b>	33	31.1%
<b>Total</b>	106	100

Further, the study sought to inquire from the respondents their level of agreement with the statement relating on the aspect of stakeholders involvement influence the sustainability of HIV projects in public hospitals. The response were rated on a scale of 1-5 on which: 1= strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= moderately agree, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree. The responses are as shown in the Table 23.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Influence of Source of Funding on Project Sustainability**

Descriptive Statistics	N Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Sustainable projects should be able to deliver services even after the main project has ended.	106	4.06	.715	-.083	.235	-1.015	.465
Health projects have a positive on the environment, energy, and water usage, and promotion of community wellness.	106	3.99	.697	-.159	.235	-.404	.465
The projects generate revenues that can help in the sustainability of the project after the donors have left.	106	4.40	.764	-.946	.235	-.177	.465
Exit plans for the projects are key in determining sustainability of the projects.	106	4.77	.522	-2.693	.235	8.531	.465

The results of the study revealed that a significant majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements that the exit plans for the projects are key in determining sustainability of the projects as shown by a mean score of 4.77 and that the projects generate revenues that can help in the sustainability of the project after the donors have left as shown by a mean score of 4.40. Further, the study showed that a majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements that sustainable projects should be able to deliver services even after the main project has ended as shown by a mean score of 4.06 and that health projects have a positive on the environment, energy, and water usage, and promotion of community wellness as shown by a mean score of 3.99.

Findings determined in the study agree with those of Colclough and De, (2010) who in their study established that projects success comprises of involving the stakeholders in making of decisions and having a good relation with the project members. The stakeholders are affected by decisions made in the course of the problem, they are also interested parties and often have the power to influence success and sustainability of a project. Assefa, Rivera and Vencatachellum (2014) findings are also in harmony with findings of the study and they established that several factors that either contribute to hinder the achievement of project sustainability: stakeholder interests and political interference; social and institutional support, policy implementation and staffing among other critical factors.

**Regression Analysis**

**A regression analysis is a statistical process used in the estimation of relationships among independent and dependent variables.** A simple linear regression model was employed to assess the influence of Stakeholders Involvement on Project Sustainability. The table below offers a summary that was used to infer on the ability of the regression line to indicate the total variation in the study’s independent variable.

The results in the table indicates that stakeholders involvement and project sustainability have a moderately strong association as shown by an R= 0.683. 0.466 was the value of the coefficient of determination (R-square). This value was implied that the model had a high explanatory power indicating that 46.6% of the variation in project sustainability is explained by the variation of stakeholders’ involvement. Therefore, other extraneous factors not studied in this research other than the error term explain the remaining 53.4% of the variation in project sustainability.

**Table 4: Regression Model Summary**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.683 <sup>a</sup>	.466	.461	.43296

a. Predictors: (Constant), StakeholdersInvolvement

From the ANOVA table 5 below, the P-value < 0.05 ((95% level of significance) which shows that the coefficient estimates of the model are jointly not equal to zero. This therefore intimate that the model is statistically significant in predicting how Stakeholders Involvement impact the Project Sustainability. This shows that the regression model has a less than 0.05 likelihood (probability) of giving a wrong prediction. This therefore means that the regression model has a confidence level of above 95% hence high reliability of the results. The model can therefore be used for estimating purposes (Kotter, 1996).

**Table 5: Analysis of Variance**

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.004	1	17.004	90.711	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	19.495	104	.187		
	Total	36.500	105			

a. Dependent Variable: ProjectSustainability

b. Predictors: (Constant), StakeholdersInvolvement

The table below shows the regression coefficients generated after running a simple linear regression model. These coefficients determine the extent of significance of the variables in predicting the project sustainability of public hospitals.

**Table 6: Coefficients of Regression**

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.755	.227		7.731	.000
	StakeholdersInvolvement	.564	.059	.683	9.524	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ProjectSustainability

The results led the study to infer that independent variable (Stakeholders Involvement) has a significant influence on the dependent variable. Stakeholders Involvement (p value=0.003) was found to be a significant predictors of project sustainability. The regression equation for the estimate of project sustainability derived from the regression analysis is as follows below;

$$\hat{Y} = 1.755 + 0.564X_1$$

When the study infers from the regression equation; a unit increase in levels of stakeholder will lead to a 0.283 change in project sustainability.

## VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The involvement of stakeholders in health projects was believed to be important in determining sustainability. Several factors were evaluated in relation to the roles of stakeholders in the sustainability of projects. One of the greatest concern is the delivery of services to the relevant stakeholders. The respondents believed that the need to have continuity of services after the project has ended was instrumental in ensuring that the needs of the stakeholders were met. Besides this, the interaction of the project with regard to the environment is critical. Third, the respondents believed that the projects should have a positive influence on the environment, energy and water usage, and the promotion of community wellness. Fourth, there was a general level of agreement that the project should be able to generate revenues that can help its sustainability. This way the project can become self-sustaining. Finally, the respondents believed that exit plans must be made before the end of a project. This way it is possible to any chances of reversal of the gains that the project would have made.

According to the finding by Heravi, Coffey, & Trigunarsyah (2015), before the introduction of any donor funded project is made, it is important to identify the different stakeholders and defining the roles that they play especially in planning. The study results agreed with the findings by Heravi, Coffey, & Trigunarsyah (2015). Lack of involvement serves as a barrier between the owners of these services and the project itself. As identified in literature review section, the stakeholders provide information on the needs of the groups they represent and quality requirements (Marston , Renedo, McGowan and Portela, 2013).

In conclusion, stakeholders are an important part of project management. During project inception, the stakeholders must be identified depending on their roles in the projects. The inputs from stakeholders serves to communicate the needs of the society and the types of services that they believe are appropriate for the people. In so doing, they are able to contextualize the kind of benefits that can be derived from the projects. When these needs are specific, the chances of sustaining the project increases as the services rendered are targeted and specific. Apart from the stakeholders who are directly involved in the project, other stakeholders are reached through corporate social responsibility. The project managers are required to maintain a positive social relation with the society by ensuring that they have regard to the conservation of the environment and the social wellbeing other society.

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