

## Factors influencing the sustainability of externally funded community projects by specifically investigating the Imali project.

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**Abstract:** - This project research study determines the factors influencing sustainability of externally funded community projects in Rwanda showcasing the Imbuto Foundation Imali project. Sustaining community-based projects faces countless challenges and some project managers are even blamed of neglecting the needs of the community. The study focus on the following specific objectives: to assess the influence of community participation, to examine the influence of resource capacity, and to determine the influence of project management skills on the sustainability of the Imali project. The study refers to the Freirean theory of dialogue and society and uses a descriptive research approach to determine several factors affecting the sustainability of community projects after funding. The population by the study comprises a total of 119 people from three cooperatives. The cooperative from Kamonyi is named “Abavandimwe”, the cooperative of Ruhango called “Imena” and the third one is Kohunya. Data was collected using appropriated instruments such as questionnaires, observation schedules, and interviews. For the analysis and interpretation, Statistical Package for Social Science was used, which showed that some demographic factors such age groups and education can affect the sustainability of community projects after funding. Community participation, resource capacity and project management skills are all clearly affecting community-based projects. While each plays its own role, they also complement each other. All cooperative members confirmed that these factors are very important to be considered for sustainability.

**Keywords:** - sustainability, community projects, cooperatives

### 1. Introduction:

Every year new social programs are introduced worldwide to improve welfare of communities and assuming that programs meet an identified need and prove effectiveness as long as they exist. Still, quite a few social programs do not last beyond the pilot stage, disappointing the hopes placed in them and wasting the human and financial investments made in them. Precise assessments of program sustainability are impossible to make based on the existing literature. Reasons are: differences in the time periods studied and in the criteria of sustainability measurement used.

The development was also required to have capacity to develop human made capital (investments infrastructure and directly productive capital goods), and social capital (the institution and culture bases and political systems can make the functionality in the society). During the last ten years, it has become a key operational strategy for many national governments, as well as for international aid

Agencies. The World Bank alone is currently supporting more than 190 active community-driven development projects in 78 countries although with ongoing arguments over their sustainability. (Wong & Guggenheim, 2018).

The failure of the sustainability is a crucial matter that should concern all program enablers and evaluators. The assessment of sustainability of new or innovative programs ought to be considered as an important last step of their evaluation. Therefore, sustainability measures must become an elementary component of program evaluations. Additionally, there is a need for more clarity and investigation about the obstacles to achieve sustainability and the reasons causing them to fail in this respect. Although there is now a growing body of literature on program sustainability, the factors and processes that foster sustainability are still not sufficiently understood (Mancini & Marek, 2005)

The government organs and NGOs in partnership with communities do establish community-based development projects. Nevertheless, in many cases the project activities collapse following the phase-out of funders support. An analysis and evaluation report published by World Vision (World-Vision, 2009) showed that, many community developments projects have failed to sustain themselves and/or become self-reliant after funding organizations withdrew their support. Even if projects collapse there are some factors, they use to make the project self-reliant.

“Freeman and Sherwood conceive policy as principles whereby societies and/or institutions on the brink of hunt solution to common problems. Studies of the recent past done in Kenya showed that desk-made aid policies that govern developmental programs at community level, can limit the quality and degree of trust between the donors, local institutions, and the beneficiaries. Transplanting policies or guidelines that are foreign to the local communities can lead to substantial dislocation of social and economic relations”. (Alinoor, 2017)

The Rwandan Governance Board (RGB) says that “the civil society remains a strategic partner for the Government of Rwanda to achieve its development goals through interventions carried out by a multi-diversity of both national and international organizations to support the citizens’ socio-economic advancement. Nevertheless, non-governmental organizations offer a critical platform for the citizens to exercise their democratic rights and participate in policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and activities implemented for their benefit” (Rwanda Governance Board, n.d.).

However, many community projects are/were launched by implementers (e.g., in the agriculture sector) without informing and consulting the beneficiaries upfront and involving them early and strong enough during the project. In many cases, this led to a lack of community participation and interest letting the project fail after funding.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) implement many programs in Rwanda. Mostly they are established or comprised of individuals or an autonomous collective of voluntaries who intend to improve the economic, social, and cultural

development. In many cases, an NGO advocates for public interests of a specific group, natural persons, and organizations with the goal of promoting a common interest of their members. One example of such an organization is the Imbutu Foundation based in the Rwanda, Kigali City. (Rwanda Governance Board, n.d.)

Most sectors in Rwanda (e.g., Business, Agriculture, Infrastructure, etc.) try to find out how to improve performance by assessment and how to develop their operations properly. Some built on increasing capital others on production quality and improving services rendered to their stakeholders. However, to change structures and workflows the sectors must know about the existing structures and policies. With a known baseline they can implement new methods to attain their sustainable goals. (Rwirahira, 2009)

The National Institute of Statistic of Rwanda (NISR) Poverty Profile Report, 2017 shows that the living conditions of citizens improved due to the implementation of applied community-based projects. Additionally, NISR collected a wide range of economic and socio-demographic variables.

The report focus on the measurement of poverty and on the variables that are associated with poverty, which are presented in the form of a poverty profile (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2017).

Imbutu literally translated means “Seed”, “a seed well planted, watered, nurtured and given all necessary support will successfully grow into the healthy plant that reaches fall and stand tall”. Imbutu Foundation envisions this for all its current and future initiatives.

Imbutu Foundation works aligned to the national priorities and fulfils its mission via advocacy, community outreach, mentorship, fostering partnerships and unleashing young talent (Imbutu Foundation, 2020).

The sustainability of a community-based project is a critical issue for many implementing agencies and beneficiaries as well as for the Government. In Rwanda, many community-based projects start running well and after funding ends, they fail. (Alphonsine, 2017) Most of the time it is said that lacking accountability, minimal participation of the community at the beginning of the project and missing local ownership are factors causing the

failure of community-based projects. To sustain community-based projects has led to countless challenges as some project managers are blamed of neglecting the needs of the community. The government is further charged of stating projects that are not discussed beforehand or priority needs of the communities have not been considered.

According to Christopher Mahonge (Mahonge, 2013) in his study on "Factors behind sustainability of activities in the post project period in Matengo highlands" indicates that it is common for project activities to end or decline in the target community just after the project has ended or some few months after its ending. As such, there has always been a doubt as to whether project activities can continue when a given project comes to an end.

There are specific and general goals of the study, which shall be investigated and to determine the factors influencing sustainability of externally funded community projects.

This study shall investigate and determine the factors influencing the sustainability of externally funded community projects by specifically investigating the Imali project.

- I. To assess the influence of community participatory on sustainability of the Imali project
- II. To examine the influence of resource capacity on sustainability of the Imali project
- III. To determine the influence of project management skills on sustainability of the Imali project.

## **2. Literature Review:**

In many publications, project sustainability is described as the ability to guarantee the project support during and after the benefits achieved are maintained and continued after the projects external funding. Sustainability of a project is further subdivided into three pillars: economy, social and environment. (Morfaw, 2014)

According to Peter Oino a community-based approach significantly raised sustainability. Sustainability was achieved where the community was able to access information, control how funds were used, and capacity built at all levels.

Discussions show clearly that project sustainability can be achieved if community-based approaches are implemented. For achieving sustainable development, it is vital for the community to play a role. The community should be able to define the development themselves by being able to be active participants. (Oino, Towett, & Kirui, 2015)

Without the community the concept of sustainability may be hard to define, or the community may not take the responsibility of the development process. At the local level, we need to see development as one that supports positive impacts to the community. This will be attained by local economic development supporting community life using local talents and resources from the local community.

Project sustainability occurs when the beneficiaries are able/capable to continue project operations without any other assistance from other partners to keep the results for their benefits. According to Githinji "describe sustainability because the power to remain available services and benefits community and institution levels without destructive effects even after special assistance like financial, technical, managerial has been phased out." (Githinji, 2013)

It is critical to the success of community-based projects that various elements of sustainability must be considered throughout each stage of the project lifecycle. Project sustainability always refers to the ownership of beneficiaries. It enables them to continue project operations and to maintain the project achievement even if the funding ends.

According to Crowther, there are four elements of sustainability, which need to be recognized and analyzed. "Environmental impact, which is the impact of the project on its environment. Organizational culture, which is the relationship between the project's internal stakeholders. Finances and adequate return for the level of risk undertaken in pursuit of sustainable development and financial sustainability". (Aras & Crowther, 2009)

This paragraph gives an overview of community-based projects. For the targeted communities their issues need to be assessed and identified first, e.g., by establishing a base-line. Most of the community-based projects then try to resolve the problems identified for the specific period.

Many community-based projects face financial problems during the projected implementation phase and have an urgent need to get funds from external sources.

Community-based organizations implement projects in various sectors, like health, economics, social, and environment but they all aim to change the life of the population in the targeted community.

There is always a need for equitable distribution of resources through monitoring while project evaluation is that constituent of the venture that maintains its momentum and on course within the budgetary constraints. The Monitoring & Evaluation needs a high level of coordination at the management level and draw from the best of each stakeholder in the entire spectrum of project execution and provide correction of any shortcomings. The performance of any project cannot be sustained without monitoring and evaluation. It is also imperative that target setting should be done collectively to realign energies and commitment of the stakeholders to the set goal (UNDP).

Community participatory in project sustainability normally led it on target and achieve more. Sustainability was achieved where the community was able to access information, have control over funds; capacity is built at all levels, and have quality projects" (Wanjohi, 2010). He notes that when the community feels the sense of duty and can maintain the flow of results from a project for their own good, then they will always feel "we are capable" notion. This then enhances their self-esteem and therefore makes them more willing to get involved in any other project.

Some popular applications of the concept of sustainability include Global sustainability, Sustainability of the environment, Sustainable agriculture, Economic sustainability, Sustainable development, and Sustainable benefits. Global sustainability refers to factors of worldwide importance such as the shrinking ozone layer, nuclear proliferation, and high population growth. Environmental sustainability is applied to the functioning of plant and animal ecosystems, including human ones. Agricultural sustainability refers to maintaining crop yields from various farming operations without harming soils.

According to Australian Agency for International Development, (Development, 2000) is closely associated to risk analysis and even though there are various, sustainability analysis can be an extension ~ analysis. "A broad sustainability analysis should be incorporated into the Country Strategy; the level of relevant detail should be expanded and refined at each stage of the activity cycle, starting from identification through to completion". It should be appraised and reviewed at least annually during implementation, and it should be evaluated to learn lessons. In this definition there be ed like the emphasis on sustaining the flow of benefits into the future rather than on sustainable programs or projects. Projects are by definition not sustainable as they are a defined investment with in clear timeline. The projects will be maintained after major assistance from donors has been completed up to the time, they are no longer required or relevant. Managing sustainability is a process aimed at maximizing the flow of sustainable benefits in a long run. (Soliman, 2015)

The Freirean theory of dialogue and society, dialogue based educational approach taken as the major typical models of project assignment has been developed by Assist. Prof. Dr. Abdullah Githinji states, "...that dialogue, particularly between leaders and community, is essential to liberation and education of the masses by challenging historically held methods via the use of critical thought" (Githinji, 2013).

Critical thought raises consciousness and questions the assumption that people should fall into established routines or systems, rather than help to form new systems that had better address their needs especially concerning projects intended to better their lives. There is negligence, lack of budget, lack of motivation, and simple ignorance, there are disparities in implementation of community-based projects. Freire's emphasis on dialogue is reflected in this project by advocacy for community involvement with the development and management of community-based projects (CBP) in order to ensure continuity and provision of basic amenities even after phasing out. "Community members deserve not only to be part of the project design and implementation, but also to be explicitly invited to that process and thus get involved in the solutions.

There is an information about instruments must be presented in accessible language and with appropriate context” (Githinji, 2013).

This research was anchored on this theory and serves as a bridge from the inaccessible and often intimidating language of development agencies to the people most affected by the discussion communities. Involvement of well-educated community in the project was lead it to the success and they can sustain their project accordingly.

Empirical Literature mentions different factors, which can hinder sustainability of the community-based projects such as financial system, stakeholders, technology, donors’ policy, and management structure. Most of the time sustainability of community-based projects is difficult to determine because of the lack of ownership when the donor-support of the beneficiaries ends. In many cases cooperation and ownership lack within the community to sustain the continuation of project.

Deogratias (Deogratias, 2013) writes about the community participation and sustainability on national water projects in Chalinze. His study was conducted in Chalinze whereby 130 Respondents were selected to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Organized Questionnaires, Focus group discussions, observation, interview the key informants and Documentary reviews were used to obtain relevant information. Checklists and Observation kits were used for interviews and focus group discussion and observation. The findings show that, the community participation in planning and implementation of Chalinze, water supply project was poor; as well as monitoring mechanism of operation and management and community participation on decision-making was not satisfactory. The gap of his study was to examine influence of management structure on sustainability of the community project.

Nyarora (Nyarora & Dr. Nyataya, 2017) studied the community participation in clean water project sustainability. The study was guided by three objectives; assess how Ruhango sector communities participate in the initial stages of clean water projects. Nyarora investigated the effect of and the obstacles to the Ruhango Sector community

participation in clean water project design and implementation. The study population composed of the household heads, other sector water informants and other water project implementers. Policy makers and implementers are to benefit from this research, as it will provide them with the insight to make clean water development projects strategies more effective for Ruhango Sector communities as well as other communities. Furthermore, organizations involved in the water development sector will gain deeper understanding as to how to manoeuvre through the hindrances to community participation. This research finding also will be useful to students and scholars doing research in this field. It will be available for reference online. The study however was not to examine influence of resource capacity on sustainability of community-based projects.

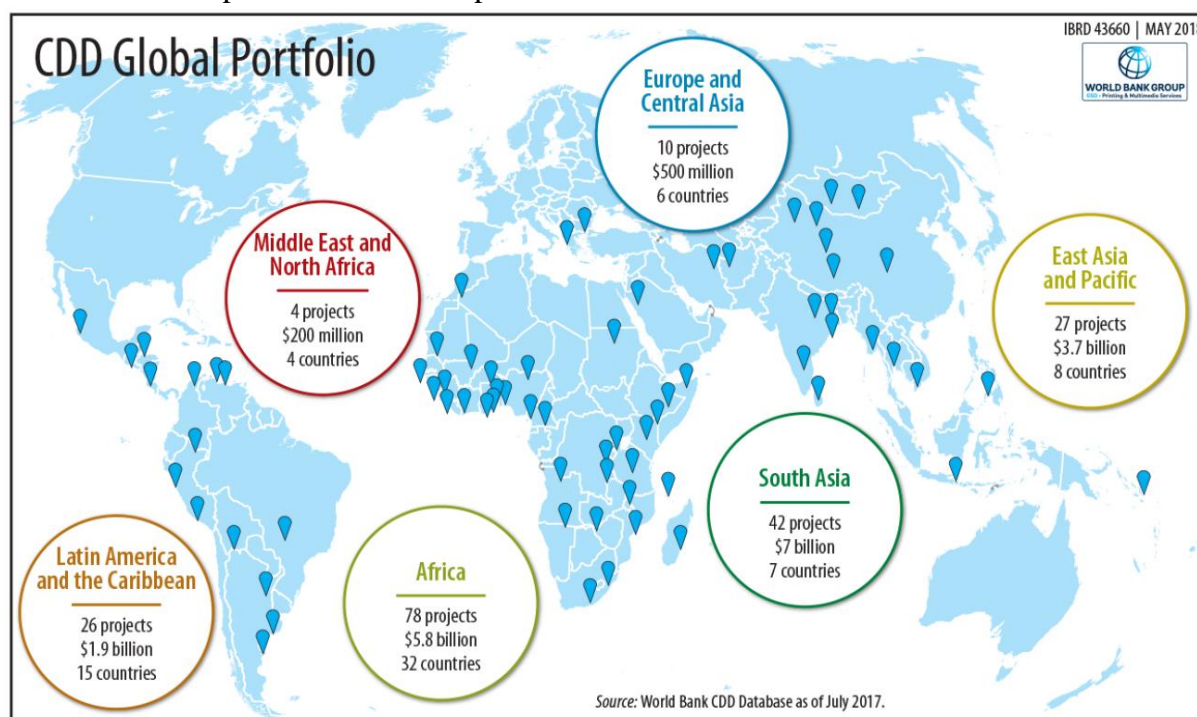
Sumuni (Kayaga, 2015) Conducted a study on “the role of monitoring and evaluation in improving sustainability in water projects Bagamoyo district, Pwani Region”. Quantitative data acquired via prepared questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews done with villagers, district officials and village government members were used together with documentary evidence. The findings of the study showed that the most applied monitoring and evaluation practices in water projects is field visit and meeting. It is well known that regular monitoring and evaluation can help track any intervening changes in many community-based projects, even though the research above have revealed that there is little consideration of monitoring and evaluation of water projects in the district, therefore this study engage more findings on monitoring and evaluation related factors which can affect sustainability of community-based projects, there is many recommendation and action points enables community-based projects stakeholders consider for more improvements. The study shows a gap when it comes to finding out the impact of poor project management, and poor management of funds, lack of commitment and motivation in sustainability of community project.

On a global level countless new community-based programs or projects are introduced every year. Projects are started under the assumption that they meet the needs, are effective, and will be effective in the future. Today precise assessment of program

sustainability is impossible to make based on the existing literature and among other reasons, due to differences in the time periods studied and in the criteria of sustainability measurements used. However, Savaya et al, 2008 state that “findings seem to indicate that as many as 40% of all new programs are not sustained beyond the first few years after termination of initial funding. The failure of sustainability is thus of considerable concern to the bodies that fund, initiate, and implement social or other programs”.

A World Bank Research paper states that “community-driven development (CDD) is an approach to development that emphasizes

community control over planning decisions and investment resources” (Wong & Guggenheim, 2018). During the last ten years, it has become a key operational strategy for many national governments, as well as for international aid agencies, with the World Bank alone currently supporting more than 190 active community-driven development projects in 78 countries with a total budget of USD 19.2 billion (see Figure 1). Additionally, community driven development programs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have provided hundreds of millions of poor villagers and self-help groups, primarily poor women, with much-needed credit services, albeit with ongoing controversies over their sustainability”.

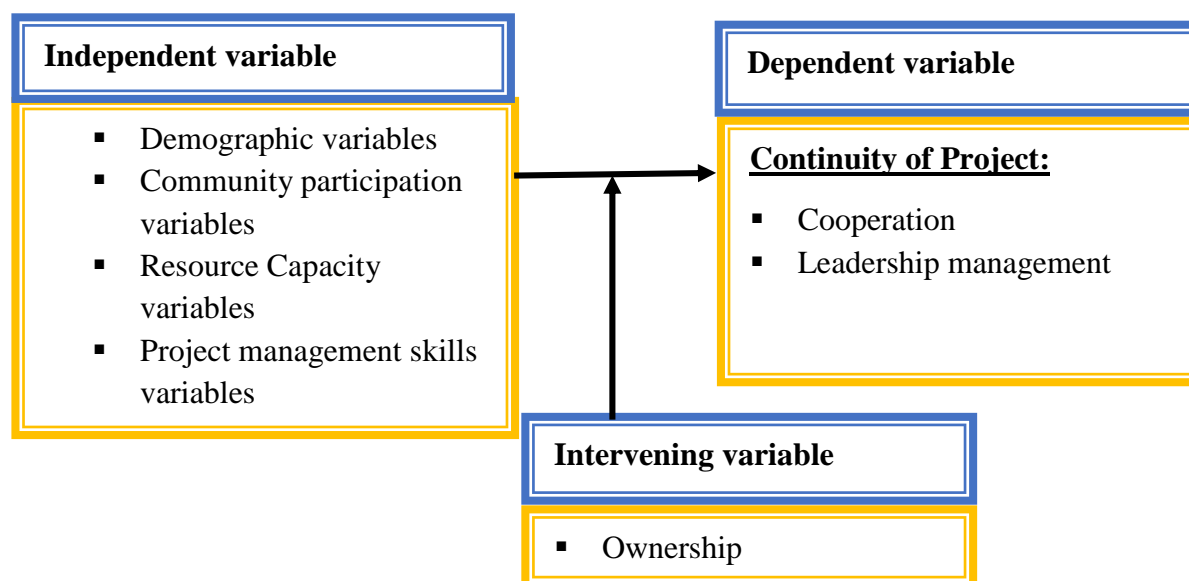


**Figure 1: World Bank community-driven development projects worldwide**

With 78 projects in 32 countries, Africa is the continent with the highest number of countries where the World Bank funds community-based development projects.

Conceptual framework is a diagrammatical research tool proposed to help a researcher to grow awareness and understanding of the situation under study and to communicate it. The study is conceptualized in a

sense that there are crucial determinants of community-based project sustainability in the illustration below showing three types of variable. As it shown below on the table, community participation can affect the project ownership, and project resource capacity affects the achievement of project goals as well as continuity of project after funding.



### 3. Research Methodology:

The study is a descriptive research approach, which is used to determine the factors influencing sustainability of externally funded community projects in Rwanda. The research data collected from the beneficiaries of the Imali Project from Ruhango, Kamonyi and Rwamagana communities and the responsible project officer of the Imbuto Foundation was interviewed and supply additional information as well. This organization has been chosen as a case study because of its unique performance and how it enables Rwandan society to change their life. The targeted population comprises a total of 119 people from 3 cooperatives. The cooperative from Kamonyi is named “Abavandimwe” (meaning “Brethren”) and comprises 20 members. While the cooperative of Ruhango called “Imena” (meaning “Importance”) consists of 33 members and the third one is “Kohunya” which has 66 members. The cooperative members are men and women, they were accompanied by one staff member of the Imbuto Foundation. This support person worked closely with the cooperatives and visited the project regularly to make sure that all planned actions were taken into place and to insure sustainability performance of all beneficiaries of the Imali Project.

There are different instruments to collect primary data among them there are: questionnaires, focus group interviews, observation, interviews, case studies, etc. For this study, both methods was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data as there are interview guides and face-to-face administered questionnaires. Both will be administered by Abavandimwe, Kohunya and Imena cooperatives and a project officer from the Imbuto Foundation. The collection of primary data will be using four tools, i.e. (i) unstructured and structured interview (ii) and personnel observation. The data will be further analyzed in line with the literature review guiding the research which also focus on how financial information is shared among stakeholders for decision-making. According to Gilbert (Gilbert & Prion, 2016) if more than half of the panelists indicate that an item is essential, this item has at least some content validity. Greater levels of content validity exist as larger numbers of panelists agree that an item is essential. In order of establish validity of the research, the researcher will have support from the supervisors, externals evaluators and panelists to be sure that all needed information are well exhaustive from data required captured.

**Table 1:** Reliability analysis of variables

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
<b>0.939</b>	<b>0.972</b>	<b>4</b>

Source: Field research data.

Cronbach’s alpha of the items was more reasonable and reliable at 93.9%.

After data collection the data must be processed, analyzed, and converted into a format which can be easily understood by the readers. Data analyses define a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to provide explanations of phenomena of interest. Thus, data will be collected as specifically for the research, the researcher will codify and load data into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23.0. The resulting tables will be analyzed to prove which factors can influence sustainability of community projects after externally funded ends using the examples of the “Imali” project.

#### **4. Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results:**

The aim of this chapter is to provide the relevant findings that were provided by the respondents. Different techniques have been used to collect primary data: Observation, Questionnaire, and Interview. The data gathered have direct relationship with the main topic and the research objectives indicated in chapter one which is general introduction. The data was analyzed using understandable tables and text. The researcher

#### **Statistical data on project management skills**

Poor management of project implementers	Little skills of personnel	Project design	Community Involvement	Government interventions	Obligation of funders	Regularly M&E (Project management)	Increase beneficiaries skills to have managerial skills (Project management)	To provide solutions of community issues where it needed (Project management)
119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119	119
3.88	3.60	3.47	3.45	3.00	3.31	3.64	3.61	3.36
0.102	0.091	0.145	0.111	0.150	0.123	0.080	0.119	0.107
1.114	0.994	1.578	1.206	1.631	1.339	0.871	1.296	1.162

The table describe the findings from the field on project management skills details are below as there is different indicators the results percentages show are the results.

#### **Pearson correlations between key predictors and Sustainability of community-based project**

selected these tools because these tests are suitable for analyzing the collected data. According to Mutua (Mutua, 2017) studies showed that mature respondents provide reliable information and youth wanted to intervene in all levels of community development projects but needs an assurance of sustainability.

#### **Communities are given a voice and vote in all aspects of the project cycle**

The table below shows the findings from the field show the community participatory, on the factor of determine project timeline showed that 21.8% disagree while 53.8% agree. From the study of Alinoor declared that community participation influences the sustainability of common based projects in Garissa County based on the results from the field (Alinoor, 2017).

The Figure 4 shows the results from the field how poor management of the projects implementers can affect its sustainability, 61% agreed while 6% disagree. The study from Alinoor determined that the achievement of the objectives of the community projects is still a challenges all come from the management skills of project implementers and beneficiaries (Alinoor, 2017).

The Figure 5 shows the results from the respondents on communicate timely as resource affect the sustainability 39.5% agree while 4.2% disagree



	Sustainability of Community-based Projects	Overall community participation	Overall project management skills	Overall resource Capacity
Sustainability of Community-based Projects	1			
Overall community participation	0.079	1		
Overall project management skills	.917**	.214*	1	
Overall resource Capacity	.970**	0.077	.934**	1

Source: Field research data.

Table 37 shows the regression to analyze the relationship between variables the results showed that dependent variable: Sustainability of Community-based Projects;  $R^2 = 0.970$ ;  $F(3, 115) = 620.739$ , Number of observations (N) = 119, P-value (p) < 0.001.

**Table 37:** Regression of key predictors on sustainability of community-based projects

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	21.222	1.418		14.968	0.000	18.413	24.030
Overall community participation	-0.141	0.367	-0.009	-0.385	0.701	-0.868	0.585
Overall project management skills	0.620	0.439	0.097	1.414	0.160	-0.249	1.489
Overall resource Capacity	6.158	0.473	0.880	13.028	0.000	5.222	7.094

Source: Field research data.

The findings of the study were presented the factors influencing sustainability of the community-based projects after funding, with analyzing different factors, I found that it is very possible that many factors can hinder the sustainability of community projects.

As highlighted above there is some demographic factors such as ages group, marital status and education affect the sustainability of community projects after funding as findings showed that many young people were moved from their home to other place as they needs to explore different things in new areas while the old one like to stay in the same place and work as they can to be sure that there is an improvement of their everyday life.

Community participatory, resource capacity and project management skills are all keen in way of affecting community-based projects as each play its own role accordingly but of courses one complete

each other both cooperatives members showed that those factors are very important to consider while sustainability is needed.

### 5 Conclusion of the Study:

The study results declared that there are different factors hinder the sustainability of community-based project after funding, such as participatory of the community in all levels of the projects, management skills required and availability of the resource capacity.

### 6 Recommendation:

The implementers should define the purpose of the project at early stage and involve the beneficiaries in the beginning, they should also make a tight follow-on everyday activities and regularly visit to verify if the project is still running.

They must support the beneficiaries as much they can to be sure that they are on good level to manage the projects after funding, and they give them all necessary requirements to make it sustain. As well as sharing management skills to make the project sustains.

The management of community-based organizations should oversee daily operations and make a strong follow up as they let the community participate and find all ways to involve them in all stages of the project implementations early stages better and make them feel their ownership. They also must acquire all management skills and manage well the available resource capacity.

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